

are the authors of *The History of Erie County*. Perhaps an answer to the reader's need to know might have been a descriptive bibliography at the end of each chapter. That is, the writers might have stated the origins of their materials and which of their sources they found most reliable. As it is, there is little interpretative or evaluative comment in or out of the text.

This reviewer does not want to detract unduly from the sincere and dedicated efforts that went into *The Women's Story*, but there are a number of other nagging reservations. At times, the burden of narrative detail demands more clarification than the writers' sources provide. As an example, Erie's log cabin school, built in 1806, is described as a small building measuring eighteen by twenty feet. This structure, according to the text, held thirty girls and forty boys — all at the same time in that limited space? In another instance, the writers should have verified such assertions as that Mildred Forness, Edinboro University's head librarian, was "a top authority" in children's literature.

But the most serious reservation on this reviewer's part concerns the absence of a summary chapter, setting in perspective the stories of 130 women. Their very number demands it. Readers need a section or chapter that attempts to relate the varied stories to the local and national story of women. As it is, the authors' only summary attempt is a two-sentence quotation from Ida Tarbell that closes the final chapter. The women whose stories are told deserve something more. Certainly, the writers might have seized the opportunity to deal with the implications of their subjects' experiences and the imperatives for women in and beyond Erie. ■

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Metropolitan Corridor: Railroads and the American Scene.
By John R. Stilgoe.

(New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983. Pp. xiii, 397. Preface, acknowledgments, introduction, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95.)

Although artists, photographers, and cinematographers frequently see beauty in the powerful scale, geometry, and textures of the older

industrial landscapes, Pittsburghers remain reluctant to celebrate these qualities. Smokestack factories, railroad tracks, and industrial scrap heaps are abandoned, demolished, and built over as the new generation rushes to get in step with the "high-tech" age. Former riverfront, valley, and hilltop industrial sites succumb to the office parks, leisure pursuits, and residential imperatives of modern life. Today's children will one day know little of their grandparents' Pittsburgh.

In *Metropolitan Corridor: Railroads and the American Scene*, John R. Stilgoe endeavors to recapture the landscape of industrial America through a depiction of the railroad's physical presence and the adjacent built environment. In their power, speed, noise, and danger railroads signified the transformation of American life by industrialization. The railroads' integrated corporate structures, standardized time, remote control electric signals, and intricate terminal yards gave expression to the efficiency and specialization of new technologies and engineering systems. High speed, named passenger trains and monumental city stations represented the elegance and urbanity of twentieth-century America (as for example, the New York Central's famed "Twentieth Century Limited" that whizzed between Chicago and New York). At the same time economic forces unleashed by railroad movement created what Stilgoe calls the metropolitan corridor; that is, the emergence of industrial districts along city tracks, the spread of city development into the adjacent countryside, and the ensnaring of small towns and remote rural areas in the urban economy.

The activities, physical arrangements, and aura of the railroad-generated corridor are Stilgoe's main interest. In the corridor he sees the spatial order of an industrial America that contrasts with the older traditional, agrarian landscape described in his first book, *Common Landscape of America, 1580 to 1845*. Throughout the nineteenth century, the evolving technologies and economics of industrial capitalism slowly reshaped the countryside and cities of America. By the 1880s, Stilgoe argues, a new landscape aesthetic had emerged. The new built environment emphasized massive scales, inanimate power, mechanical devices, manipulated efficiencies, and rapid movement. In one chapter, "Zone," he describes the smokestack industrial districts that relied on railroad connections for their life. In "Villa" he examines the horticultural order of commuter train suburbs, and in "Depot" the railroad's intrusion into small town life. Railroads tied these new landscapes together, and in turn linked them to twentieth-century American life. The depot, for example, was the small town's portal on the metropolitan corridor. People, information, capital, and goods flowed

through the depot between city and country. "No longer did the general store, barber shop, and post office focus small town life; instead the depot, the gateway to the corridor, attracted everyone interested in metropolitan excitement" (p. 193).

In other chapters Stilgoe develops more specific aspects of the new American landscape. At times these discussions become tediously detailed, especially those of electric powerhouses, dangerous railroad crossings with pedestrian and vehicular traffic, and railroad company gardening. Nevertheless, each provides a vignette of the industrial era, forcing us to recognize these persistent but often overlooked (or vanishing) elements of our contemporary landscape. From urban terminal to main street depot, Stilgoe asks the reader to envision the functioning and shape of the built environment of the railroad age. For older readers, he may arouse nostalgic sentiments.

While Stilgoe sometimes delves into the minutiae of railroad technology, train life, and track ecosystems, *Metropolitan Corridor* is not really a book for railroad buffs. He always examines these topics with an eye for their revelation of the era's infatuation with technology, engineering, and glittery urbanity. Stilgoe contends that today we often view the industrial age from the reformer's vantage, emphasizing entrepreneurial excesses and social side-effects of industrial capitalism. Operating deftly from the interdisciplinary traditions of American Studies scholars, he draws evidence from both literary sources and popular culture to argue that most Americans embraced the fast-paced, manipulated, and profit-driven aspects of the industrial order. Passages written by the era's most famous novelists, such as Fitzgerald, Cather, Wolfe, London, Wharton, and Sinclair Lewis to name but a few, dozens of contemporary illustrations and photographs, and copious references to popular magazines support this argument and expressively portray American landscape and culture. Further, the author finds the culture's ethos distinctly captured in children's toys, and what better example could be found for this book than the catalogues, gadgetry, and leading trains of the Lionel Company? The author's zesty writing style and vivid imagery, often captured in a word or phrase such as "scurry" to depict the pace of life, make *Metropolitan Corridor* an enjoyable sojourn in turn-of-the-century America.

Stilgoe's history is more visual than social. Although he briefly glances at the shabbier sides of the tracks and the transient lifestyles of hobos and bums, his picture consists largely of an elite and middle-class slice of American life, based on sources of the literate and

Not surprisingly, Pittsburgh-area landscapes play a major role in Stilgoe's vision of the industrial "Zone." No place symbolized industrial capitalism more than the "Iron City" did. Stilgoe draws liberally from the outpouring of journalism, photography, and research that chronicled Pittsburgh's industrial drama for the nation. While Pittsburgh scenes rarely appear in other chapters, Stilgoe's broad depiction of the metropolitan corridor provides a useful framework for Pittsburghers to examine, understand, and appreciate their early twentieth-century heritage. As America embraced the automobile and turned away from the railroads, the hallmark features of the metropolitan corridor slowly began deteriorating and disappearing. Pittsburgh's industrial age landscapes remain prominent; but even here in the heart of Vulcan, buses speed along former railroad rights-of-way, luxury restaurants and shops are retrofitted into former railroad buildings, and massive factories stand eerily subdued alongside weed-filled sidings. Pleasure boats replace river barges, game fish swim where few survived in early years, and marinas and parks elbow out factories from riverfront sites. Even though Stilgoe's perception is selective, he successfully captures the visual aspects and ambience of an early industrial era, the geography of which still undergirds the Pittsburgh region today. The human hardships of the city's current economic transition encourage few to share Stilgoe's enthusiastic appreciation for this past, but the rapid pace of change in the built environment commends Pittsburghers to pay attention to their industrial landscape before it vanishes. ■

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