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The Filth of Progress: Immigrants, Americans, and the Building of Canals and Railroads in the West

Ryan Dearinger

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Ryan Dearinger : The Filth of Progress: Immigrants, Americans, and the Building of Canals and Railroads in the West before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Filth of Progress: Immigrants, Americans, and the Building of Canals and Railroads in the West:

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The Filth of Progress explores the untold side of a well-known American story. For more than a century, accounts of progress in the West foregrounded the technological feats performed while canals and railroads were built and lionized the capitalists who financed the projects. This book salvages stories often omitted from the triumphant narrative of progress by focusing on the suffering and survival of the workers who were treated as outsiders. Ryan Dearinger examines the moving frontiers of canal and railroad construction workers in the tumultuous years of American expansion, from the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825 to the joining of the Central Pacific and Union Pacific railroads in 1869. He tells the story of the immigrants and Americans—the Irish, Chinese, Mormons, and native-born citizens—whose labor created the West's infrastructure and turned the nation's dreams of a continental empire into a reality. Dearinger reveals that canals and railroads were not static monuments to progress but moving spaces of conflict and contestation.

"Despite navigating such huge geographical and cultural boundaries, The Filth of Progress is able to present a coherent history, which hardly veers off the main tracks of its arguments... an instant classic."