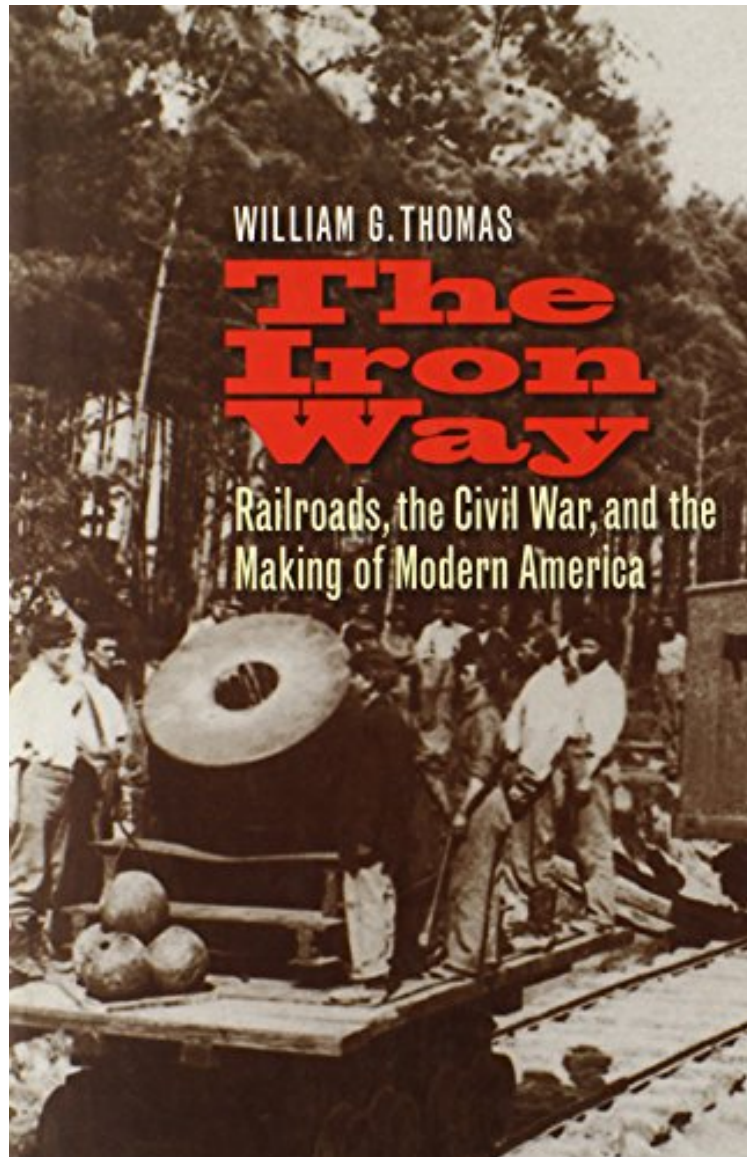


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The Iron Way: Railroads, the Civil War, and the Making of Modern America

William G. Thomas III

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William G. Thomas III : The Iron Way: Railroads, the Civil War, and the Making of Modern America before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Iron Way: Railroads, the Civil War, and the Making of Modern America:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. rating THE IRON WAYBy walter e. smithIn a graduate course in

Civil War History, I wrote a paper on southern railroads in the Civil War. This book showed me what I'd missed. Especially interesting was the way Southern businesses were isolated from European financiers and the way Rothschilds Baring looked at the South's prospects. After the end of the conflict, the U.S. Military RR sold locomotives etc. at cost in some cases just left them where they were - thereby jump-starting the Southern roads. 4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. All Aboard for the Real Thing By Richard S. Dixon Jr. This is an excellent book for all concerned. The casual student of the Civil War will find a readable and informative book that breaks new ground in a subject which is saturated with good books (forgive the mixed metaphor, please). Civil War buffs will find even more to read; students will love it for its readable and short (210 pages) format. All in all: a great book on the Civil War; a wonderful essay on the importance of railroads in the development of modern America. The age of the railroad lasted a long time and did much to shape our country; we in the era of planes and computers tend to forget that. I rode the train overnight from Atlanta to Louisville in 1959 to my grandfather's funeral. I don't think we even thought about flying or driving. When I rode the Cardinal from Charlottesville to Cincinnati in 1973, the era of railroading was clearly over, and the railroad was a somewhat backward, somewhat bizarre way of moving from one place to another (the trip cost me \$20). Even the bus was more popular, and the railroad carried with it unique challenges: I stood behind singer Burl Ives at the Los Angeles Amtrak station in 1974, who cancelled his ticket to Chicago when he found out they put him in a compartment over the wheels. His last words were: "C'mon, let's go to the airport." I continued on to Chicago, seeing as I was travelling in a seat, no overnight accommodations: LA to Chicago, about \$95. Clearly, by the 1970s, the grand railroad had been reduced to a minor, somewhat idiosyncratic player in American transportation. Thomas's book goes a long way to remind us of the once mighty power of the iron rails that girded the land, won a war and set the stage for the modern mess we now find ourselves in. I read this book with a great deal of interest. It is well-written, well-researched, and well-argued. It stands in clear opposition to the idea that the South was a backward, slave-driven agricultural society, moving away from the emerging modern world. Quite the opposite, in fact, as Thomas shows, the South was eagerly embracing modern technology (it had ever since Whitney's cotton gin, in fact) as long as it could carry its slave system into the new world. And it sure tried. Thank goodness men such as Grant, Sherman and Lincoln persevered. Read all about it in this fine book. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Review of *The Iron Way* By Michael J. Deeb *The Iron Way: Railroads, the Civil War, and the Making of Modern America* I found the research excellent. But, the work is lacking in maps to support the narrative. Thus It is not as valuable a work as I had hoped. Dr. Michael J. Deeb

Beginning with Frederick Douglass's escape from slavery in 1838 on the railroad, and ending with the driving of the golden spike to link the transcontinental railroad in 1869, this book charts a critical period of American expansion and national formation, one largely dominated by the dynamic growth of railroads and telegraphs. William G. Thomas brings new evidence to bear on railroads, the Confederate South, slavery, and the Civil War era, based on groundbreaking research in digitized sources never available before. *The Iron Way* revises our ideas about the emergence of modern America and the role of the railroads in shaping the sectional conflict. Both the North and the South invested in railroads to serve their larger purposes, Thomas contends. Though railroads are often cited as a major factor in the Union's victory, he shows that they were also essential to the formation of "the South" as a unified region. He discusses the many—and sometimes unexpected—effects of railroad expansion and proposes that America's great railroads became an important symbolic touchstone for the nation's vision of itself. Please visit the Railroads and the Making of Modern America website at <http://railroads.unl.edu>.

"A tour-de-force, and offers a series of bracing insights about the origins, shape and outcome of the Civil War...Because it integrates military and social history so imaginatively, *The Iron Way* is a must-read for students, scholars and enthusiasts alike."—Civil War Monitor