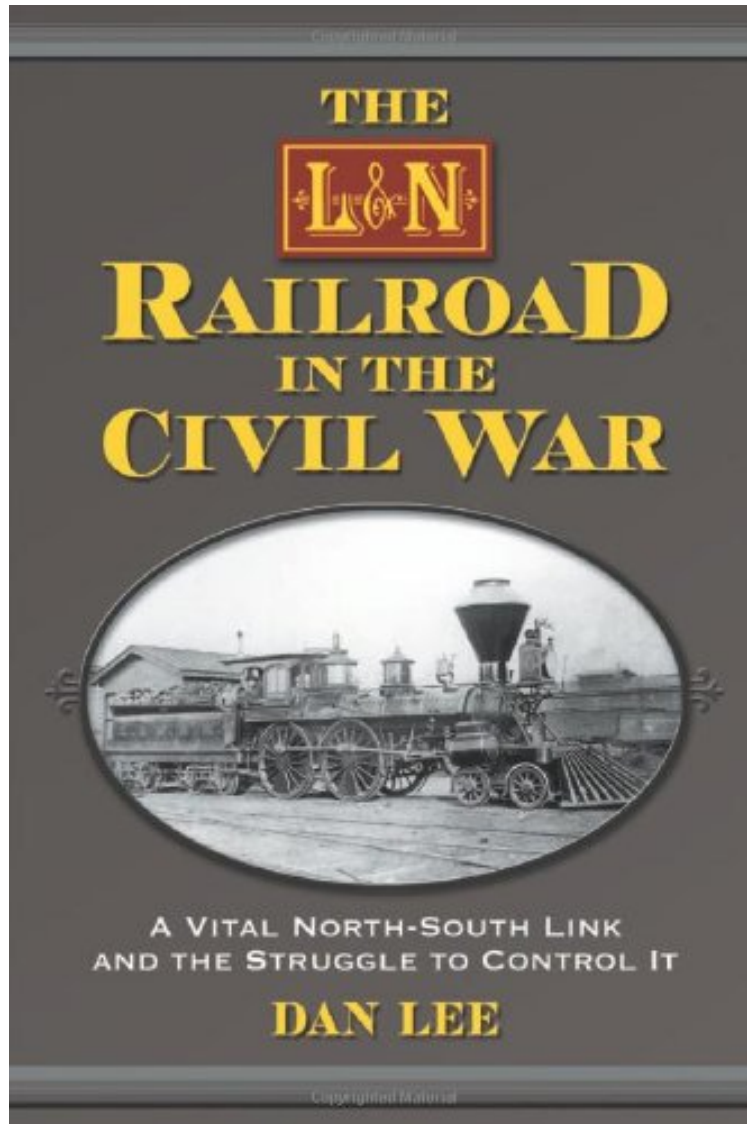


(Free read ebook) The LN Railroad in the Civil War: A Vital North-South Link and the Struggle to Control It

# The LN Railroad in the Civil War: A Vital North-South Link and the Struggle to Control It

Dan Lee

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**Dan Lee : The LN Railroad in the Civil War: A Vital North-South Link and the Struggle to Control It** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The LN Railroad in the Civil War: A Vital North-South Link and the Struggle to Control It:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. My only complaint is that it would have been nice if it covered lines that later became LNBy Wall DogMy only complaint is that it would have been nice if it covered lines that later

became LN, and not just the main stem - KC, WA etc.2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. excellent read

By Charlie Knight Being a self-professed "railroad nut" in addition to being a Civil War historian, I love books that combine both topics. Although Festus Summers' work on the BO in the CW back in the '30s was the first such to specifically tackle the topic, few works appeared afterward devoted solely to one line during the years 1861-65. That has changed in recent years - David Stone's *Vital Rails* about the Charleston Savannah was excellent and Dan Lee's recent *McFarland* release on the LN is a good one as well. Although at just under 200 pages of text, *The LN Railroad in the Civil War* is shorter than most *McFarland* books, it is one of their better releases (though still pricey at \$35 for a paperback). Lee is quite knowledgeable on the Civil War in Kentucky and it is very apparent in his writing, for this is more than just a recounting of John Hunt Morgan's raids on the Louisville Nashville or James Guthrie's exploitation of the Federal government, it is a good concise history of the war in the central portion of the Bluegrass State. Lee provides an excellent summary of the importance of railroads during the Civil War: "Civil War generals were notoriously slow in giving up the Napoleonic tactics they had studied at West Point...And yet, somehow, the generals were uncharacteristically quick to realize the importance of railroads, and they fought to deprive the enemy of their use. Some 30 percent of Union forces were assigned to railroad defense. Every theater of war saw railroad destruction as a costly but necessary feature of the struggle." (p 11) The LN was one of but a few railroads that spanned the border betwixt United States and Confederate States in 1861, giving both sides an interest in it. Its president James Guthrie - one of the most influential businessmen of the 1850s and 1860s, and Franklin Pierce's Secretary of the Treasury - was not one to ignore the unique situation into which this placed his railroad. He courted both sides and would eventually gain for his railroad benefits given no other line by the Lincoln Administration during the war. He was simply too politically well-connected and his railroad too militarily important to antagonize. The LN had been constructed before the war to a standard not often seen on other lines at the time (though Billy Mahone's Norfolk Petersburg was more than a rival in terms of quality). One of the engineers was Albert Fink - one of the most brilliant railroad men and engineering minds of the 19th century. Having such high standards aided in keeping the line in efficient operation throughout the war, despite the destruction of some of its most important engineering feats - the bridge at Gallatin and Big South Tunnel and constant raids by John Hunt Morgan and Joseph Wheeler. While Bedford Forrest and Earl Van Dorn's combined Holly Springs-West Tennessee raids in late 1862 often are credited as being the most successful cavalry raids of the war and the only "raid" that had a major strategic effect on a major campaign, Morgan's raid on the LN earlier in '62 was no less spectacular and had a similar effect. Morgan's Gallatin raid in August 1862 destroyed 800 feet of tunnel among other things, crippling Don Carlos Buell's supply line and forcing him to abandon his planned move into the Tennessee interior and Chattanooga (although subsequent moves by Braxton Bragg and Kirby Smith into Kentucky would have forced him to abandon the Tennessee campaign). Writes Ball: "Morgan could not have known it, but he would never do anything greater than what he had just done for the Confederacy. The railroad was closed for 98 days, but its importance is seen in the context of the larger picture. For the first time Morgan had conducted a raid, not only to satisfy his personal craving for adventure and attention, but in co-operation with a major military objective, stopping Buell." (p 72) But John Hunt Morgan's destruction done to the LN could have been much worse than it actually was during 1862. When the "Thunderbolt" captured a train, enemy soldiers were of course captured and military stores and equipment either captured or destroyed, as often was the train itself. However if a number of ladies were present on the train, the chivalrous Morgan would spare the train so as not to deny the ladies transportation. "If James Guthrie had loaded a delegation of women on every train, he might have save a lot of rolling stock and a good many locomotives." (p 62) Lee does sometimes get sidetracked on tangents not directly related to the LN (for instance the level of detail in retelling of Morgan's capture), but these are not detrimental, as they just serve to paint a larger picture of the war in Kentucky and Tennessee. It is very apparent from his writing that he is not a fan of Albert Sidney Johnston or John Bell Hood, and is quite partial to Joseph Johnston. And like many other writers he falls prey to the incorrect notion that a close pre-war friendship existed betwixt Braxton Bragg and Jefferson Davis. However, none of this is any great fault. What is a major flaw is the maps - or lack thereof. There is but one map - of the war-time LN - and it is located at the very back of the book when it should have been placed near the front. Yet the book overcomes its lack of maps with excellent content. Lee does not get bogged down (as is so easy to do) with raw data of annual tonnage moved, net revenues, etc. lifted straight from the LN annual reports. The narrative is very readable, flows well, and is more or less on topic. What is missing - although admittedly out of the scope of this book - is an appendix telling "the rest of the story" of the LN, which became one of the largest railroads east of the Mississippi prior to its merger into the CSX system. Also of interest would have been an short look at the LN's involvement in the centennial tour of "The General" of Great Locomotive Chase fame, as the former Western Atlantic had come under LN control. Lee's book is a well-written volume which belongs on the shelf of anyone interested in the Civil War in Kentucky, 19th century railroads, and of course is a must-have for all LN buffs.3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A Unique Book.

By Mark Longstroth This book was easy to follow. It focused on the major overland supply route into the center of the Confederacy and the numerous raids that cut and damaged this railroad. This summary provides more information on this specific area and southern raids than the normal campaign treatments. It is a close look at the reasons why overland supply was so difficult in the area between the Mississippi

and the Appalachian Mountains. James Guthrie, the president of the railroad managed to maintain control of this railroad and make a tidy profit besides. He is the major character in the book and certainly steals the show from numerous southern raiders. I would recommend this book to railroad aficionados and students of the Western Theater as well as the war in Kentucky. The topic was unique, graphics were few and I would have liked more. Probably not a lot of information on this specific topic. The book had only one map and it should have been in the front not the back. There were some period pictures and engravings that helped the reader visualize the railroad rolling stock and some of the fortification that were used to protect it. The western railroads are a major area little reported on in Civil War books.

The Louisville Nashville Railroad was completed just as the first salvos of the Civil War erupted. As one of the few railroads linking the North and South, the LN was valuable to both the Union and the Confederacy. Consequently, its route became a fiercely contested corridor of fire and blood. This history recounts the numerous military events along the LN in the years 1861 through 1865, and also examines the still-resonant theme of the relationship between a major corporation and the government during a time of national crisis.