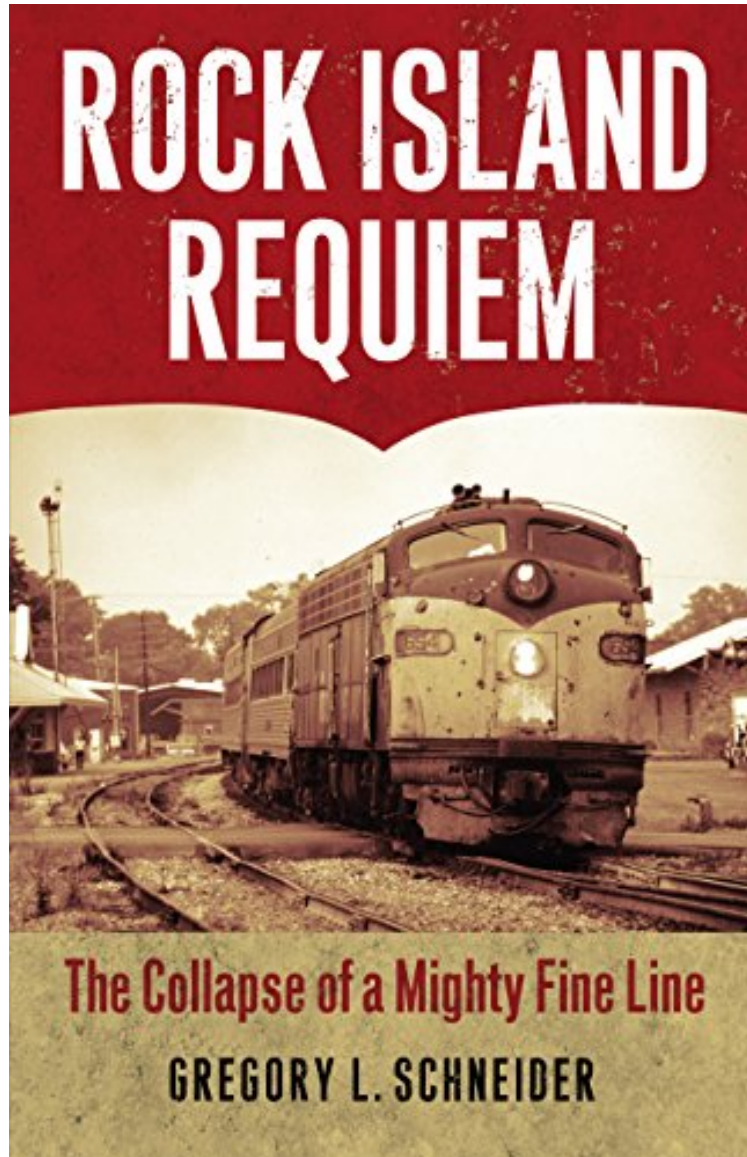


(Library ebook) Rock Island Requiem: The Collapse of a Mighty Fine Line

Rock Island Requiem: The Collapse of a Mighty Fine Line

Gregory L. Schneider

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Gregory L. Schneider : Rock Island Requiem: The Collapse of a Mighty Fine Line before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Rock Island Requiem: The Collapse of a Mighty Fine Line:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. End of a proud railroadBy GRGEORGEANPAI grew up in Rock Island, IL and my grandfather worked as a trainman on this line so had personal interest in this story. The author warned that this would be a tedious study in unending legal action or I should say inaction by all involved from the railroads, the unions, and surprise the federal government. It did clarify as a test case to finally free railroads from

some onerous and outdated regulations. It does take patience to get through this volume. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Finally, a history of one of the more tragic railroad failures. By W Alexander Vacca. Until this book was written there had been no history of the Rock Island Line's final years. The story was told, in passing in Richard Saunders' "Main Lines" and "Merging Lines", but what he covered in paragraphs Schneider details in chapters, explaining exactly why things played out the way they did. Schneider has written a worthy companion to Salisbury's "No Way to Run a Railroad" and Binzen Daughen's "Wreck of the Penn Central". Those two older books look in detail at the collapse of Penn Central and the problems of Eastern railroading in general. Rock Island was a Midwestern railroad, and had very different problems. (One aspect hinted at, but left unexplored, is why the East Coast railroads received so much Federal attention, while those in the Midwest, like The Rock and The Milwaukee Road, were ignored despite having a seemingly easier solution.) Schneider has a detailed discussion of the operational and financial collapse of The Rock, interspersed with lively descriptions of the major players. Unlike the shenanigans that bedeviled (and distracted) Penn Central, the people here come across as good Midwestern folks trying to do their best—even Ben Heineman, who comes across as the villain of the piece (as he does in the Milwaukee Road saga) is a solid, decent, Midwestern sort of villain who is ruthlessly advancing the interests of his company, unlike most of the unhappy Penn Central executives about whom very little good can be said. Most of the book deals with the legal fiddling as The Rock burns, and it is only in the end that the intransigence of labor appears to finally kill the railroad, which by then is something of a mercy killing. Schneider displays an archival historian's love of his subject. The book could be subtitled "The Wit and Wisdom of Judge Frank McGarr" given some of the detailed quotations woven into the story. Sometimes the detail overwhelms even the author, as for example an anecdote about support from the state of Iowa for a branch line that appears twice, almost verbatim. But this is a minor flaw in an otherwise excellent narrative that shows that even competently managed railroads could be destroyed by the obsolete and hostile regulatory structure in which they operated. I read this book with real pleasure, and people who are interested in the business history of railroads have my strongest recommendation to spend the weekend reading this volume. I hope that Schneider, or one of his students, devotes the same time and attention to the collapse of The Milwaukee Road, for which we only have the unsatisfying first person account of "The Nation Pays Again". 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A must for Rock Island fans. By J at Kwaj. Extremely detailed history of the last 40 years of the Rock Island. Amazing story of bureaucratic incompetence and gross selfishness of multiple persons and organizations leading to the possibly unnecessary death of a major railroad.

Celebrated in history and song, the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad Company—the Rock Island Line—was a powerful Midwestern railroad that once traversed thirteen states with its fast freights and Rocket passenger trains but eventually succumbed to government regulation and a changing economy. Gregory Schneider chronicles the Rock Island's painful decline and along the way reveals some of the key problems within the American railroad industry during the post-World War II era. Schneider takes readers back to a time when railroads still clung to a storied past to offer new insight into the devastating impact of economic policymaking during the 1960s and 1970s. Schneider recounts the largest railroad liquidation in American history—as well as one of the most successful reorganizations in American business—to depict the demise and ultimate collapse of Rock Island as part of a broader account of hard times in the railroad industry beginning in the 1970s. Schneider weaves a complex story of how business, politics, government bureaucracy, and individual greed helped to limit the economic possibilities of the railroad industry and catapult the Rock Island Railroad into oblivion. Weakened by a troubled economy, the Rock fell victim to inept management and labor union intransigence; but Schneider also reveals how government regulations and price controls prevented innovation, hindered capital acquisition, and favored other forms of transportation that lie beyond the scope of regulation. Railroads were even hurt by taxation of property and real estate while competitors were able to use government-subsidized highways and airports without having to pay taxes to fund them. Now that America has gone on to witness the collapse of such mammoth firms as Enron and Lehman Brothers, not to mention the bankruptcy and bailout of General Motors, the story of the Rock provides an instructive lesson in how a major American enterprise was allowed to fall victim to forces often beyond its control—while the bailout of the Penn Central, at the expense of smaller lines like Rock Island, helped initiate the era of "too big to fail." For economic historians and railroad buffs alike, *Rock Island Requiem* is a well-researched and informative work—and a mighty good read.

“An exciting story that is well researched and pleasingly written and that makes a major contribution to recent railroad history.” —H. Roger Grant, author of *The Railroads: The Life Story of a Technology*

“Schneider’s careful research shows that misguided regulation forced a troubled railroad out of business and made bankruptcy lawyers rich. *Rock Island Requiem* reminds us how the all-powerful Interstate Commerce Commission turned the railroad industry into a basket case, much to the nation’s loss.” —Marc Levinson, author of *The Box: How the Shipping Container Made the World Smaller and the World Economy Bigger*

In Schneider’s tightly-organized, clear, and illuminating history, the Rock Island becomes a key ingredient

in the reshaping of the economic partnership between government, industry, and finance at a crucial period in American history."mdash;Edward Brunner, author of *Splendid Failure* and former employee of the Chicago, Rock Island Pacific Railway"Gregory L. Schneider has given us a fine account of this excruciatingly tangled affair. . . . The book is an important contribution to our understanding of regulatory proceedings and the workings of bankruptcy litigation."mdash;American Historical "This is one of the greatest contributions to railroad history that has been presented over the past several years, and one cannot completely understand the history of US railroads in the final half of the 20th century without reading this book."mdash;Railroad History"ldquo;In Schneiderr's tightly-organized, clear, and illuminating history, the Rock Island becomes a key ingredient in the reshaping of the economic partnership between government, industry, and finance at a crucial period in American history."ldquo;"Edward Brunner, author of *Splendid Failure* and former employee of the Chicago, Rock Island Pacific Railway"ldquo;Schneiderr's careful research shows that misguided regulation forced a troubled railroad out of business and made bankruptcy lawyers rich. *Rock Island Requiem* reminds us how the all-powerful Interstate Commerce Commission turned the railroad industry into a basket case, much to the nation's loss."ldquo;"Marc Levinson, author of *The Box: How the Shipping Container Made the World Smaller and the World Economy Bigger*"ldquo;"An exciting story that is well researched and pleasingly written and that makes a major contribution to recent railroad history."ldquo;"H. Roger Grant, author of *The Railroads: The Life Story of a Technology*About the AuthorGregory L. Schneider is a professor of history at Emporia State University and the author, most recently, of *The Conservative Century: From Reaction to Revolution*.