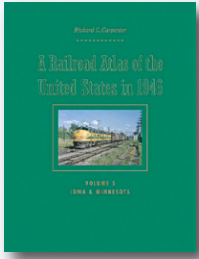# A RAILROAD ATLAS OF THE UNITED STATES IN 1946, VOLUME 5: IOWA AND MINNESOTA

By Richard C. Carpenter.

The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013.

232 pages, 170 color maps. $70.00, hardcover.

ISBN: 978-1-4214-1035-7

Review by: Jed Marti, Artis LLC

The *A Railroad Atlas of the United States in 1946* series captures the extent and geographic organization of railroads near the height of their influence on the American landscape. Volume 5 details Iowa and Minnesota; the previous 4 volumes cover the northeastern states.

In 1946, railroads employed 1.3 million people maintaining tracks and equipment with a military-like organization. Any town of importance had one or more railroads servicing its industry and transportation needs. In these times, before the arrival of the daily train, "the day was glorious with expectancy; after them, the day was a dead and empty thing" (Twain 2009). Railroads were very much at the forefront of life as they are now in the background.

Following a short introduction are maps of Minnesota and Iowa followed by some short notes on each. Two important pages list railroad company abbreviations, many of which are no longer obvious to us (e.g., MILW: Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul, and Pacific Railroad).

The maps are hand drawn and labeled and are taken from a variety of sources both modern and historical. Except for some details, they are based on USGS 1:250,000 and 7.5 minute quadrangles, or historical atlases. Important population centers have more detailed maps. There is considerable railroad detail but little other content than bodies of water, political boundaries, and place names. The author has hand drawn railroad features from a selection of 10 colored pens. Railroad markings mostly concern operational details: round houses, control towers, train order offices, switch controllers, bridges, crossings, viaducts, stations, coaling stations, telegraph call letters, and milepost markers. Somewhat wider markings delineate multiple tracks on the same grade and dashed lines indicate abandoned lines.

An appendix for each map provides railroad operational details such as dates for construction of switching mechanisms, towers and abandonment. Much of this is dry detail but a few nuggets of colorful history scattered throughout make for delightful reading. An index of place names completes the volume.

Why would a cartographer want a historical atlas and is this the one they should purchase? This is an attractive volume and the maps are more appealing than the modern black and white *SPV's Comprehensive Railroad Atlas of North America* series. The color coding helps separate the railroad features from political and water features. The inclusion of notes on each map is also welcome; I'm unable to find any similar comprehensive attempts. Could we wish for more? Modern GIS could generate historical maps, with the 3rd dimension being compressed time. Color and animation could bring out the salient features against the changing historical background.

Can this volume be useful to the modern transportation planner? We are experiencing a minor change in attitudes about public transportation. Light rail, trolleys, and interurban services are available or being constructed in most large cities and have increasing ridership. Many such existed in the past but were destroyed by the ubiquitous automobile. The late 1800's saw a massive increase in these systems, many constructed with little thought to who would use them. It behooves us to study both the successes and failures. Much of the infrastructure lies buried beneath us—grades and routes constructed earlier can be reused if their locations are known.

Would you use this atlas as a guide for some fieldwork or railroad tourism? As suggested in the introduction, probably only in conjunction with some other atlas that is also at 1:250000 scale; the lack of modern roads and features on the maps makes it a difficult activity using this atlas alone. This would be exacerbated in unpopulated areas where few such features exist and railroad remnants may be more interesting to find. An open question is whether or not all the features shown are from 1946. If a Midwestern river changes course (as they are wont to do) are we seeing the 1946 river or the 2013 river? An atlas with 2013 features and 1946 rails might be confusing and consequently be limited to just this purpose. Finally, the hardback format

might be a problem on a field trip, what with spilled coffee and lunch.

Is this a collection of maps a cartographer would enjoy perusing for their artistic qualities? Certainly, this work is a major undertaking for a single person. The patience necessary to draw the maps and the steady hand for filling in the details on hundreds of them (this is the 5th volume after all) is unlikely to be found again, killed by the very technology we wish might have been used. That being said, there is much more one could wish for in details and references.

As a railroad nut (the polite term is "railfan"), I randomly examined some of the voluminous literature of railroad history and there is nothing of this scope even at the state level. Individual volumes may present more history (Carr 1989; Whitehouse 1988) but the maps are of secondary importance or non-existent. Most are in black and white and not particularly easy to decipher. Authors tend to concentrate on specific railroads or locales. Internet collections are not comprehensive and have only short histories, perhaps one or two photographs, and uncertain scholarship.

Mr. Carpenter has begun a vast undertaking—more than three fourths of our land mass remains to be serviced. This 5th volume is part of the Johns Hopkins University Press series *Creating the North American Landscape* which covers such esoteric topics as alley houses, the development of public courthouses, and the evolution of the mobile home. I look forward to further volumes that encompass the West—a vast railroad landscape for mining and public transportation, the remains of which are still visible to those that will look.

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Twain, Mark. 2009. *Life on the Mississippi*. New York: Signet Classics. First published 1883.

Whitehouse, P. 1988. *Steam Railways of the World*. New Jersey: Chartwell Books, Inc.

ABSTRACTING GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION IN A DATA RICH WORLD: METHODOLOGIES AND APPLICATIONS OF MAP GENERALISATION
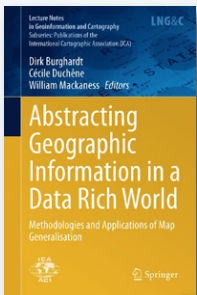
Edited by Dirk Burghardt, Cécile Duchene, and William Mackaness.

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407 pages, maps, diagrams, illustrations. $139.00, eBook.

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Review by: Timofey Samsonov, Lomonosov Moscow State University

Abstracting Geographic Information in a Data Rich World is an ambitious work that presents cutting edge achievements in one of the most complicated areas of professional cartography: map generalization. The ten hot research topics that comprise this 400-page volume are tightly fitted into a synoptic observation format that makes you feel the variety, depth, and breadth of contemporary map generalization research. While the fundamental work edited by Buttenfield and McMaster (1991; glorified by Dr.

Anne Ruas as a "generalization bible" in its preface) [1] concentrated on generalization rules and knowledge engineering, this book follows the direction established by the 2007 ICA volume *Generalisation of geographic information: Cartographic modeling and applications* (Mackaness et al. 2007). It discussed the possibilities of on-demand mapping, real-time generalization, and agent-based systems that allow simultaneous generalization of a set of objects from different themes. The current volume is significantly more user-centric, wider in scope, and primarily addresses solving complex high-level methodological and technological problems, while leaving the many technical implementation details to the bibliography list that is available to inquisitive readers.

The main body of the book stretches from Chapters 2 to 11. Each chapter consists of two parts: the first part states the problem and reviews current approaches to solving it, the second part consists of three case studies (except Chapter 11, which includes results from seven national