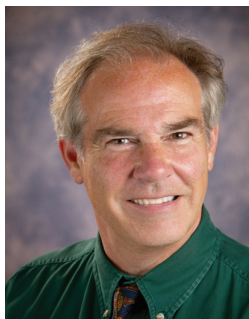


Book Watch

STEAM AND DIESEL

by Alex Moore



The golden-yellow center light on the cover of Chris Van Allsburg's impressionistic *The Polar Express* contrasts with the warm brown of the engine dotted by snowflakes at midnight. The atmosphere is nostalgic. The romance of the scenery gliding by to the clickety-clack cadence punctuated by whistle blasts in oscillating carriages while reading a book or chatting with a neighbor seems like that of a vanished era.

The art and aura, however, still exists, and can be found with the help of *Tourist Trains Guidebook: 450 Attractions—including 175 In-Depth Reviews* (Kalmbach Publishing, 978-0-87116-273-1). Jim Wrinn, editor of *Trains* magazine, presents trains one can catch for railroad reminiscing. Located in Hyannis, for example, is the Cape Cod Central Railroad that operates a diesel-powered scenic excursion and dinner train from May to October. The autumn trip is colorful as its merlot-colored engine and two red carriages clang and rumble along cranberry bogs near harvest; red maples and the Atlantic Ocean provide the background art. Another excursion, popular in winter, is the *North Pole Express* steam locomotive train in Owosso, Michigan. It carries children past snow-covered pine trees to the "North Pole," a twelve-mile trip where believers meet Santa. The *North Pole Express* was the model and sound effects machine for the steam train in the movie, *Polar Express*.

For history enthusiasts there's *The Duluth, South Shore & Atlantic Railway: A History of the Lake Superior District's Pioneer Iron Ore Hauler* (Indiana University Press, 978-0-253-35192-0) by John Gaertner, author of *The North Bank Road: A History of the Spokane, Portland & Seattle Railway*. The DSS&A was formed in 1887 to connect Sault Saint Marie and Duluth, serving the iron ore and copper industry of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The book is complemented by thirty-five maps and 137 black and white photographs; one is of a curving track that led to ore docks in Marquette, where in 1889 between 1,000 and 1,500 gondolas were unloaded daily to waiting boats.

In *Iron Rails in the Garden State: Tales of New Jersey Railroad* (Indiana University Press, 978-0-253-35174-6) Anthony J. Bianculli, author of *Railroad History on American Postage Stamps*, stocks his book with historical anecdotes. One concerns the Central Railroad of New Jersey responding to an emergency in 1881. President James Garfield's condition from an assassin's bullet was worsening, and he'd decided to leave for the twenty-room Francklyn "cottage" near the seaside resort of Elberon to help his recovery. A special rail car was fitted with a spring-cushioned bed and ice chests below with a ventilated ceiling. To reach the cottage from the resort, a mile-long spur was built overnight using 300 volunteer railroad builders and calcium lights.

If one is interested in technology, Dan Free, who has studied East Asia's modernization through railway technology, chronicles the aspects of cultural and engineering evolution in *Early Japanese Railways, 1853-1914: Engineering Triumphs That Transformed Meiji-era Japan* (Tuttle Publishing, 978-4-8053-1006-9). "Japan was highly earthquake-prone, and bridges had to be engineered with this in mind," Free writes.

Independent publishers and university presses continue to keep romance and history from vanishing. **F**

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