FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Allies of the Earth: Railroads and the Soul of Preservation

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"It was 1915, the place was San Francisco, and America's railroads were stealing the show," states the author. The trio of exhibits leading this theft were a miniature mock-up of the Grand Canyon spread across an incredible six acres, a four-acre Yellowstone replica, and a full-scale Old Faithful Inn being utilized as a dining hall. Masterminding the coup were America's railroads, proudly highlighting their collective achievement of tying together a continent. The legacy of these extraordinary exhibits at the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition may well have been the eventual creation of the National Park Service.

The author holds a PhD in History from the University of California, and is a consulting editor of *Natureza & Conservaco* and author of many environmental histories, including *National Parks: The American Experience*. Throughout this book, he leads the reader through America's railroading eminence, its current malaise, and its impending rebirth.

Once, railroads served as connectors of communities, allowing passengers the opportunity to relax, meet new friends, and enjoy unspoiled scenery. The *Phoebe Snow* stands as just such an example. Its comfortable daylight service between the cities of Binghamton and New York made traveling both an adventure and a joy. Unfortunately, railroads were eventually allowed to concentrate on the less nostalgic but more profitable freight business, manipulating passenger schedules in an attempt to discourage riders. They were so successful in this shortsighted scheme that highways began carrying not only more people, but also much of the railroad's previous freight business.

In Europe, trains encourage human interaction, serving as “cultural cement” between both neighboring towns and nations. They run on time and if one is missed, the next one is never far behind. There, also, all forms of transportation are wisely interconnected for maximum efficiency and convenience. Strangely, Americans embrace the automobile despite its having claimed “three million” lives in the last century. “With less than half that number (1.27 million) dead on battlefields, all the wars ever fought by the United States do not even come close,” states Runte.

Multiple chapters provide an overview of current and historic rail service to Glacier, Yellowstone, and Grand Canyon National Parks, immersing readers in the romance of visiting the nation’s wonders in an alternate, more relaxing mode. Here, the text could have been aided by a clear statement that Glacier Park Lodge sits not in the park, but on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation.

Allies of the Earth is a worthy addition to any collection. With a multitude of handsome illustrations and a compelling argument for a return to increased rail service for both freight and passengers, this volume is not only a good read, but a valuable resource for America’s future.