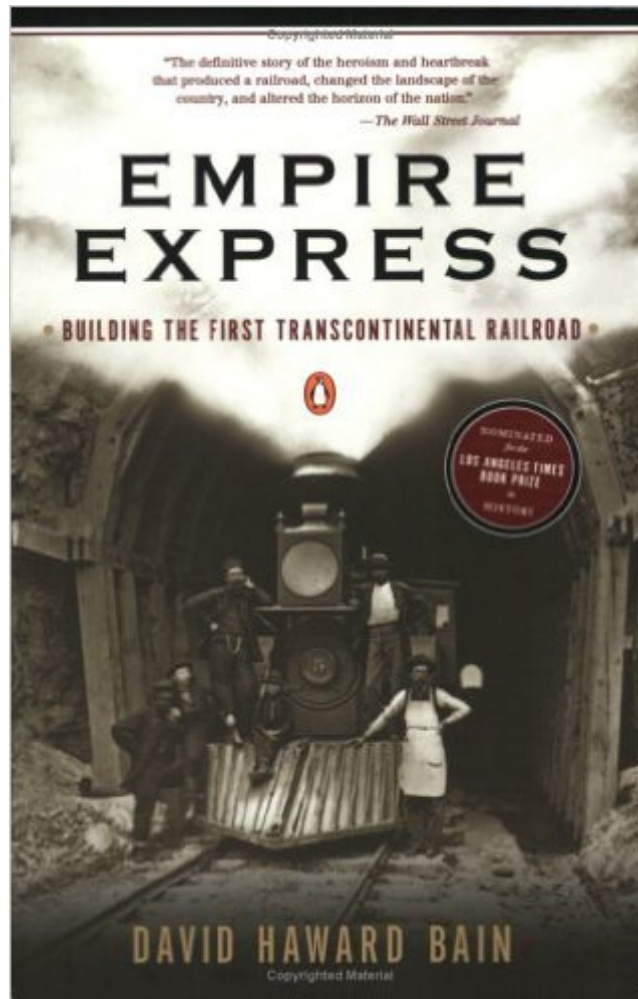


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Empire Express: Building The First Transcontinental Railroad



Synopsis

After the Civil War, the building of the transcontinental railroad was the nineteenth century's most transformative event. Beginning in 1842 with a visionary's dream to span the continent with twin bands of iron, *Empire Express* captures three dramatic decades in which the United States effectively doubled in size, fought three wars, and began to discover a new national identity. From self-made entrepreneurs such as the Union Pacific's Thomas Durant and era-defining figures such as President Lincoln to the thousands of laborers whose backbreaking work made the railroad possible, this extraordinary narrative summons an astonishing array of voices to give new dimension not only to this epic endeavor but also to the culture, political struggles, and social conflicts of an unforgettable period in American history.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 3.9 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (77 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

"*Empire Express*" immediately deserves to be listed as the seminal work on the building of the transcontinental railroad, if only because there are no other historical works I can think of about this topic that are as expansively detailed. The Union Pacific-Central Pacific venture was one of the truly pivotal moments in American history, and Mr. Bain does indeed present it as such. It is more than obvious in reading "*Empire Express*" that there was a great deal of time involved in research. It is also evident that there was easily enough information/facts to fill multiple volumes if Mr. Bain had desired to do so. The primary strength of this book is its spike-by-spike account and the vast amount of information provided. Not only does Mr. Bain present the railroad itself, he brings us the major

players who envisioned this project, built the line, and ensured that it would be built without interference. He also weaves in the surrounding history (i.e. the Civil War) and politics of the era to highlight everything that helped or hindered the railroad. Another of the strong points in this book is that Mr. Bain lets the information and the historical figures do the "talking". I give kudos to Mr. Bain, because he avoided skewing the account through his personal opinion, which seems to be the unfortunate trend in some historical circles today. There were two things that kept me from giving this a 5-star rating. First, it was a very slow read. Granted, most historical works are; however, this seemed to proceed more tediously than most. Second, there were several points in which Mr. Bain unloaded so much information on the reader that it was literally disorienting.

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