

Railroads and the American People

Course #	20SRA
Format:	Seminar
Moderator(s):	Dean Poli, Chuck Aulino
Date and Time:	Wednesday, 10:00- Noon 10 weeks, starting Feb. 26, 2020
Location:	UMass Transit Center, Amherst
Maximum number of participants:	16
Auditors accepted:	Yes, up to 2

Purpose: The Seminar will study the impact of railroads on the culture, commerce and spirit of America as well as the economic, military and social impact railroads have had on American society.

Description: Given the vast expanse of our country, the challenges of and obstacles to transportation were myriad from the nation's beginning until the vast expansion of railroads was completed in the decades before and after the turn of the twentieth century. With this expansion came opportunities for national, even international travel and trade at speeds never previously dreamed of. Towns and cities located around railroad depots and junctions thrived or failed, their fates tied to the success or failure of the railroads that served them. For many Americans, these employment opportunities meant entry into the middle class; and to many railroaders, their career was a source of great pride. Although, for more than 100 years it was the common belief that railroads would always be the country's primary facility for transportation, with the advent of the automobile, truck, bus and aircraft, the role of the iron horse was eventually eclipsed.

A small list of possible topics one can cover are famous RR lines, such as The Empire Builder, The Broadway Limited, The Coast Starlight Line, and The California Zephyr along with special trains such as orphan trains, and presidential funeral trains. The station agent, conductor and porter, and union stations are other possible topics. The design of RR towns, the role of the US Post Office and Railway Express Agency may also be included. A more detailed list will be available at the Preview.

Role of participants: Each participant will make a 30-minute presentation and then lead a 15-minute discussion. Audio-visuals are encouraged but not required. Suggestions for topics will be provided to participants in advance.

Resources: The primary publication has the same title as this seminar, *Railroads and the American People*, by H. Roger Grant, Indiana University Press. Numerous sources for further reading appear at the end of this book.

About the Moderators: Dean Poli has moderated or co-moderated approximately 10 LIR seminars, most of which have dealt with history. Chuck Aulino has participated in a number of seminars over the last 3 1/2 years, many dealing with history, and has been the moderator for one and co-moderator for two others.