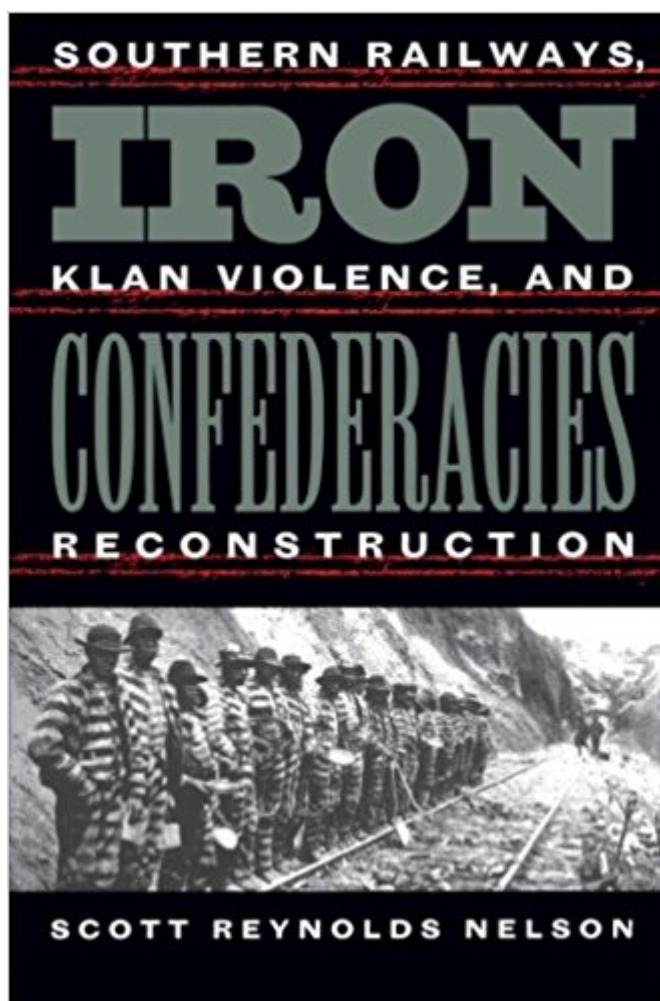


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Iron Confederacies: Southern Railways, Klan Violence, And Reconstruction



Synopsis

During Reconstruction, an alliance of southern planters and northern capitalists rebuilt the southern railway system using remnants of the Confederate railroads that had been built and destroyed during the Civil War. In the process of linking Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia by rail, this alliance created one of the largest corporations in the world, engendered bitter political struggles, and transformed the South in lasting ways, says Scott Nelson. *Iron Confederacies* uses the history of southern railways to explore linkages among the themes of states' rights, racial violence, labor strife, and big business in the nineteenth-century South. By 1868, Ku Klux Klan leaders had begun mobilizing white resentment against rapid economic change by asserting that railroad consolidation led to political corruption and black economic success. As Nelson notes, some of the Klan's most violent activity was concentrated along the Richmond-Atlanta rail corridor. But conflicts over railroads were eventually resolved, he argues, in agreements between northern railroad barons and Klan leaders that allowed white terrorism against black voters while surrendering states' control over the southern economy.

Book Information

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contribution."American Historical Review""[I]t is a sparkling example of scholarship that moves effortlessly across the boundaries of business, social, and political history."Journal of American History""The story is captivatingly written, briskly paced, and contains a wealth of detail."Journal of Southern History"•Nelson• offers a new perspective on North-South relations during the era of Redemption."Virginia Magazine of History and Biography"Nelson's truly innovative insights, solid research, and narrative skill make his book a significant and welcome contribution."American Historical Review"•!•t is a sparkling example of scholarship that moves effortlessly across the boundaries of business, social, and political history."Journal of American History"[A] fine study, which offers new and fresh interpretations and does so by integrating a range of disciplines."Civil War Book Review"[I]t is a sparkling example of scholarship that moves effortlessly across the boundaries of business, social, and political history."Journal of American History"

The story is captivatingly written, briskly paced, and contains a wealth of detail.--Journal of Southern History
This impressive book combines penetrating knowledge of the financial and managerial aspects of railroad building with a compelling grassroots depiction of social change and conflict. It advances our understanding of the economic, racial, and social aspects of Reconstruction in a significant way. As an added bonus, the writing is clear and lively.--Paul D. Escott, Wake Forest University
Iron Confederacies weaves disparate strands together into a seamless whole. A concise summary cannot do justice to this pithy and polished book, which displays exceptional wit. Suffice it to note that it is a sparkling example of scholarship that moves effortlessly across the boundaries of business, social, and political history.--Journal of American History
Iron Confederacies leaps immediately to the top of the pile of books written about nineteenth-century southern railroads. Scott Nelson has imaginatively run his train of thought over the trunk lines of other scholars, and laid new tracks of his own as well. The result is a volume that does not merely challenge long-held notions about railroads, development, and southern politics, but also offers a new perspective on North-South relations during the era of Redemption.--Virginia Magazine of History and Biography
[This] new book tracing the contributions of slave labor to one sector of the economy helps to concretize the reparations question.--Jack Beatty, Atlantic Unbound
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[A] fine study, which offers new and fresh interpretations and does so by integrating a range of disciplines.--Civil War Book Review
An outstanding work in social history. . . . Nelson writes in a simple and lively style.--Southern Historian

A great book, on time and perfect

As the title suggests, Scott Reynolds monograph focuses on Southern railroad development from a political, social and economic perspective. Before the war states rights advocates prevented connecting tracks between the states for fear of losing control of established economic patterns. Rail development was also limited by the shortage of investment capital. To raise money states guaranteed stock by a system called "hypethcation" which made the stock marketable abroad. During the war connecting links were forged out of necessity, but wartime use and shortages left the system in a deplorable state. The author well describes this in the harrowing tale of CSA President Davis and his family evacuating Richmond in 1865. The struggle for control after the Civil War pits the conservative elements, i.e. the Klan, against the new economic opportunity of freedmen. The railroad feeds the violence between the two, sparked in Alamance, NC and Spartenburg, SC. In Reconstruction control is usurped from A. B. Andrews' innovative southern business, the Seaboard Inland Air Line, by a northerner, Tom Scott. He invents the concept of the holding company which served the purpose of shielding those really in power with the result that investors now could confidently put money in securities and not fictional "hypethcated" investments. Money dried up for Southern investors leaving Northerners in control. But peace demanded accommodation. Cotton and tobacco filled rail cars perpetuating staple agricultural and Southern conservatives achieved redemption. On the other hand African Americans suffered a new humiliation in laboring under a convict labor system. Nelson's scope is limited to the important route between Richmond and Atlanta. However it is in this key area that events lead him to his compelling argument that railroads in the south served to limit democratic authority, continued the South's reliance on agriculture, and perpetuated conservative authority. The importance of through freight between the states, despite state imposed political impediments, is evident by the bill of lading. Andrews, in putting together the Seaboard Inland Air Line and using the bill of lading, provided rapid transit by multiple companies. An "air line" was more nebulous and less subject to state regulation and restrictions. Not only that, but a bill of lading was legal title to the freight. Knowledge of how to use this marketing power was found in New York wholesalers, not local merchants transferring control to the north. Nelson's argument that railroads in the south served to limit democratic authority, continued the South's reliance on agriculture, and perpetuated conservative authority adds to other scholars interpretations of post bellum southern development.

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