



# **The North American Railroad: Its Origin, Evolution, and Geography (Creating the North American Landscape)**

*James E. Vance Jr.*

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The Baltimore and Ohio. The New York Central. The Canadian Northern. The Union Pacific. The Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe. The names of the great North American railroads are part of a remarkable story of technological achievement and economic progress. They evoke the romance and optimism of decades of westward expansion--and they recall the railroad's inescapable ties to the continent's geography.

A uniquely North American rail technology In *The North American Railroad*, James Vance offers a sweeping account of how the railways transformed the continent. He challenges the commonly held belief that a single rail technology spread from Britain to the rest of the world. Instead, he argues, two distinct traditions of railroad building and utilization developed simultaneously--beginning in Britain around 1825 and in the United States around 1830.

The world's greatest system of railroads

By 1917 the North American railnet had transformed the continent and become the most comprehensive in the world with a quarter of the world's trackage built in the United States alone, and a third in the U.S. and Canada combined. Illustrated with more than one hundred maps, diagrams, and historical photographs, *The North American Railroad* is the definitive account of that extraordinary achievement--and what it meant for the people and landscape of the continent.

"In this original and authoritative work, Vance argues that the railroad in North America is a distinct indigenous creation and not an importation from Britain and Europe. His combined familiarity with railroading, routes and cities, facilities, and North American geography is unsurpassed and the result is quite unlike anything in the historical or specialist literature."--Donald Meinig, Syracuse University

"No previous book has presented the over-all picture of the development of the North American railroad network with Vance's emphasis on the reciprocal relationships among the economic and technological conditions on the one hand and the geographic aspects of development on the other. The scope of the presentation is virtually encyclopedic -- and there is no doubt that the book will quickly become a standard reference on the subject." -- Harold M. Mayer, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee

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