

# The American West at the End of the Twentieth Century: Railroads Past and Present



Railroad Noir: The American West at the End of the Twentieth Century (Railroads Past and Present)



by Hilary L. Rubinstein

★★★★☆ 4.5 out of 5

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The American West has always been a land of vast distances and rugged terrain. In the 19th century, the railroad played a vital role in opening up the West to settlement and development. Railroads transported goods and people across the vast expanse of the region, and they helped to create a sense of national unity. By the end of the 20th century, railroads were still an important part of the Western landscape, but their role had changed significantly.

## **The Early Days of Railroads in the West**

The first railroad in the United States was built in 1830, but it wasn't until the 1850s that railroads began to play a major role in the development of the American West. In 1859, the Central Pacific Railroad began construction of a line from Sacramento, California, eastward. At the same time, the Union Pacific Railroad began construction of a line from Omaha, Nebraska, westward. The two railroads met at Promontory Summit, Utah, on May 10, 1869, completing the first transcontinental railroad.

The transcontinental railroad had a profound impact on the American West. It made it possible to travel from the East Coast to the West Coast in a matter of days, and it opened up the West to settlement and development.

Railroads also played a vital role in the development of the Western economy. They transported goods and materials to and from the West, and they helped to create new markets for Western products.

### **The Rise of the Automobile**

The rise of the automobile in the early 20th century began to challenge the dominance of railroads in the American West. Automobiles were faster and more convenient than trains, and they could travel on roads that were not accessible to railroads. As a result, railroads began to lose market share to automobiles. By the end of the 20th century, railroads were no longer the primary mode of transportation in the American West.

### **The Railroads Today**

Although railroads are no longer the dominant mode of transportation in the American West, they still play an important role in the region's economy and culture. Railroads transport freight and passengers, and they are also used for recreation. In recent years, there has been a growing interest in rail travel, and several new passenger trains have been launched in the West. Railroads are also an important part of the Western landscape, and they continue to evoke a sense of nostalgia and romance.

The American West has a rich history of railroads, dating back to the 19th century. Railroads played a vital role in the development of the West, and they continue to be an important part of the region's economy and culture. Although the rise of the automobile challenged the dominance of railroads in the 20th century, railroads remain an important part of the Western landscape.



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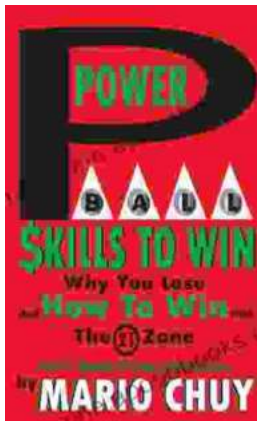
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