

Book Review

BOUND BY STEEL & STONE **The Colorado-Kansas Railway and** **the Frontier Enterprise in Colorado,** **1890-1960**

By J. Bradford Bowers

University Press of Colorado

ISBN 978-1-64-642-127-5 • 284 pages

Reviewed by Forrest Whitman

NEXT TIME YOU ENJOY a Colorado peach from the Salida Farmers Market or a juicy cantaloupe from a Cañon City farm stand, you might think of the events and people this book introduces. The Colorado lands stretching back from the banks of the Arkansas River were never hospitable for human endeavors. It took people like Irma MacDaniel and George H. Paul to develop the infrastructure and farms. They had a vision of integrating the lands along the Arkansas with the bigger economic and development world. More important, they were the "boosters" who convinced many that the Arkansas country could grow more than skinny cows and rattlesnakes.

If you live here you're well aware that much of the land around Pueblo, Cañon City or Cotopaxi is arid. It is sand or thin soil, sagebrush and not much more.

Agriculture businesses often did not survive. There was little hope for them. As J. Bradford Bowers points out, when Irma MacDaniel essentially took over managing the Kansas and Colorado railroad, (all 25 miles of it) there was little hope for its survival either. The

railroad's route from Pueblo to Stone City was not on anyone's development map. To make matters worse, the directors were battling entrenched political machines at every turn.

In 1917 MacDaniel took over the railroad and kept on managing it till the last day in 1957. The board was dominated by A.B. Hulitt and A.O. Fox. At a time when women were seldom managers of railroads, MacDaniel had their full support. She even made modest profits many years. MacDaniel was eventually named general manager and given one share of stock. Hers is a story of early feminism in our state.

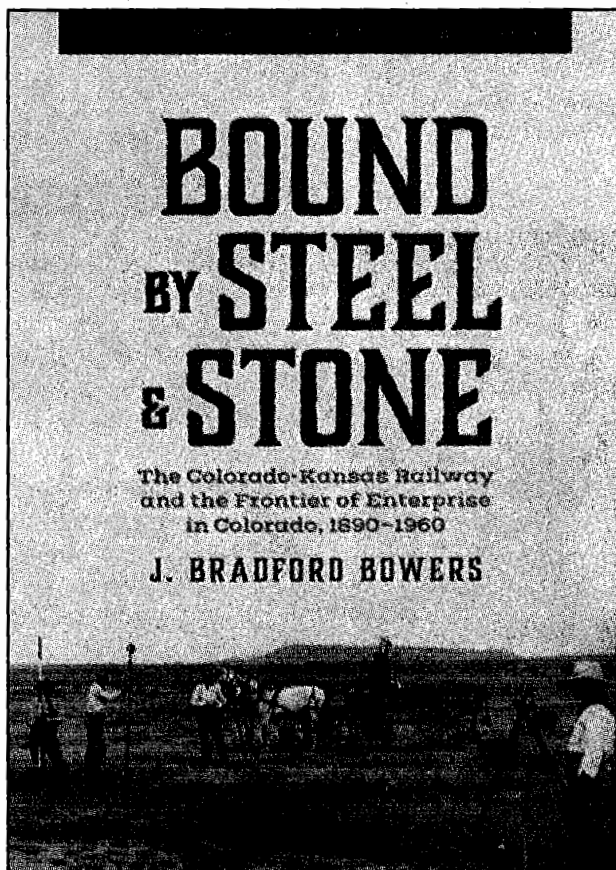
Bowers makes note of the popularity of the sanstone produced by quarries at Stone City. Look at the Pueblo County building for a good example. Irma got that stone to market. But sandstone for building and facing was never a huge market item. I like it because it is so dusky brown and almost glows. The market seems to have preferred shiny marble. She also produced mud used in steel making. Car switching revenue from some of the big companies helped her bottom line too. Chicago Freight Car and Parts Company depended on her for switching, and urged her to keep going even in the 1950s.

The author does a good job of highlighting the landscape of the railroad, its physical characteristics and the area it served. It's the landscape that either works with or against development. The reader will enjoy following this section especially if you live in the area. Some of the rail bed can still be traced.

It's slow going for this reader about all the legal battles for the railroad franchise. Maybe a big chart of all the lawsuits, tiffs with city councils, changes of

politics and so on would help. Bowers lays out the struggles in great detail and this reader was happy to see the first train running and not have to read any more of that.

There is good coverage of some of the schemers



and dreamers too. My favorite is George H. Paul of the George H. Paul Orchard Company. He targeted "farmers, horticulturalists and students at agriculture schools." His "Indians in Sun and War dances" and his railroad tours all attracted a following. He sold his land at county fairs with the hostess, Laurena Wade, "the most beautiful woman in Colorado."

Teller Dam was being built along with other irrigation systems in the first decades of the twentieth century. The area around Cañon City saw the first big ditch projects. The extension service was coming up with new kinds of dry land wheat, and orchards were being planted. It was a right time to buy land, said George. But, as so often happened, he went bankrupt. Even the Teller Dam on Turkey Creek was on shaky financial ground. The boom and bust cycles along the Arkansas were typical of the West.

The author's section on the people of Stone City is moderately interesting. Some of Bowers' ancestors are featured. They were a scrappy bunch and knew how to adjust to changes. Nothing remains there today.

This book is a pleasant read. It's especially good for readers of Colorado Central Magazine since this is the coverage area. Bowers has done a good job here. ♦

CrestoneArtists.com

Open Studio Tour

**Saturday and Sunday
October 9th and 10th
12 pm to 5pm**

**15 artists offering their
works and visions**



**View, download, request
free catalog at
crestoneartists.com**

FAST. RELIABLE. INTERNET.

GET FIBER SPEED AND
INTERNET PHONE
FOR HOME & BUSINESS.



719-937-7700

COLORADOCENTRALTELECOM.COM

