

BOOK REVIEW

The Katy Railroad and the Last Frontier. By V. V. Masterson. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952. XVI, 312 pp. Illustrations, maps, bibliography, index. \$4.00)

The current interest in biography of industry and of corporate enterprise has brought another excellent contribution to the fast growing—thanks in no small measure to the University of Oklahoma Press—library of Oklahoma history. It has been often said that the two things that wrought the most significant change in the economy of the Indian country were barbed wire and the railroad. V. V. Masterson, in his highly readable book on the life and history of the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railway, has well demonstrated how true this be as to the railroad part thereof.

The entrance of the "Katy" into the Indian Territory was as dramatic as it was spectacular. A special clause in the Congressional enactment gave the right to build across the Indian Nation, in accordance with the permission granted by the tribes in their treaties of 1866, to the railway company that first built a "first class" line to its border. Author Masterson, with all the excitement of a football announcer, takes the reader along in a play-by-play description in the race to the line between the Katy and its rival, the "Border Tier Road". One can almost hear the sound and rhythm of the spike hammers in the feverish drive to lay track across the virgin land.

With access to all of the company files and with careful attention to the details of corporate records, the author records the birth of the present Katy in September 1865. Known then as the Union Pacific Railway Company Southern Branch, the line soon outgrew its humble beginning; and being the first to traverse Indian Territory, it alone opened the great empire of Texas to the Union. The line was not content to rest on its Texas traffic, but with the purchase of defunct charters, half finished rights-of-way and feeder lines it emerged into the great system known today. Each of these phases of its growth is presented separately; and the reader is treated with a most readable account of the fight for the St. Louis gateway, the race to bridge the Missouri River at Franklin and the extensions all the way to Houston and San Antonio.

Oklahoma readers will be particularly interested in the many references to Indian Territory history, especially when it is realized that nearly all of the present cities along the Katy from Vinita to Durant owe their birth to the adriot enterprise of the Katy officials. Even the names of the towns originated with these men, and the stories of these cities when they were "end of track" on the Katy are

frontier stories at their best. Special attention is given to such towns as Vinita, Muskogee and McAlester and they occupy a prominent place in his narrative. Likewise, names as Elias Boudinot, B. F. Colbert and even Belle Starr find their place in the story. However, readers must be reminded that this is the history of a railroad and not of Oklahoma; and minor inaccuracies, such as "headright" in reference to the Cherokees and Choctaws, are easily overlooked and forgiven.

As a matter of personal taste only, it does seem that a little too much attention has been given to supposition and conjecture on the motives of the developers and executives of the railroad. The job, if it was to be done, was a big one, and it took big men in their field, financiers, promoters and engineers to do the job. To continuously attach to their every act an implication other than that of getting the task completed is not hardly fair—considering the times and the job to be done.

—George H. Shirk

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