



A Social History of Mexico's Railroads: Peons, Prisoners, and Priests (Jaguar Books on Latin America)

Teresa Van Hoy

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Largely absent from our history books is the social history of railroad development in nineteenth-century Mexico, which promoted rapid economic growth that greatly benefited elites but also heavily impacted rural and provincial Mexican residents in communities traversed by the rails. In this beautifully written and original book, Teresa Van Hoy connects foreign investment in Mexico, largely in railroad development, with its effects on the people living in the isthmus of Tehuantepec, Mexico's region of greatest ethnic diversity. Students will be drawn to a fascinating cast of characters, as muleteers, artisans, hacienda peons, convict laborers, dockworkers, priests, and the rural police force (rurales) join railroad regulars in this rich social history. New empirical evidence, some drawn from two private collections, elaborates on the huge informal economy that supported railroad development. Railroad officials sought to gain access to local resources such as land, water, construction materials, labor, customer patronage, and political favors. Residents, in turn, maneuvered to maximize their gains from the wages, contracts, free passes, surplus materials, and services (including piped water) controlled by the railroad. Those areas of Mexico suffering poverty and isolation attracted public investment and infrastructure. *A Social History of Mexico's Railroads* is the dynamic story of the people and times that were changed by the railroads and is sure to engage students and general readers alike.

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