

Railroaders without Borders: A History of the Railroad Development Corporation

Bloomington: Indiana University Press • Fall 2015 • \$45.00 cloth

By **H. Roger Grant**

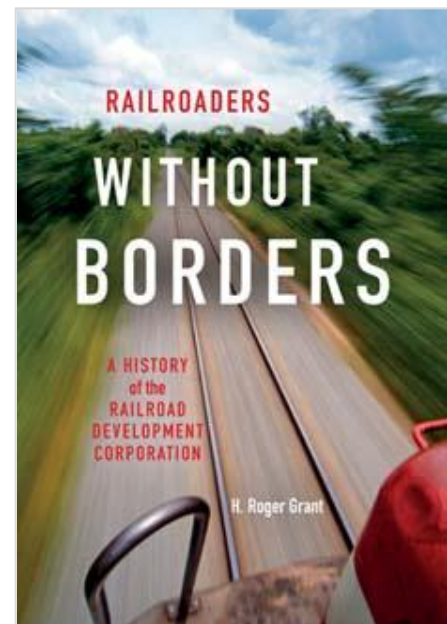
Kathryn and Calhoun Lemon Professor of History

Clemson University • Clemson SC 29634

ggrant@clemson.edu • 864-654-9999

Railroaders without Borders is a study of the Pittsburgh-based Railroad Development Corporation (RDC) and reveals how a small yet creatively led railroad investment and management company has functioned in diverse environments for more than 25 years. On a global scale RDC has resurrected a series of down-and-out, even defunct railroads. There have been disappointments, but there also have been triumphs.

Launched in 1987 by Henry Posner III, a young, enthusiastic and talented railroad professional, the Railroad Development Corporation initially sought to acquire and revive several American railroads, including the Pittsburgh & Lake Erie. Although setbacks occurred, RDC became involved in the early 1990's with the former main line of the liquidated Rock Island Railroad between Chicago and Omaha and eventually acquired ownership of the Iowa Interstate Railroad, a property that has become profitable and the jewel in RDC's crown.



Since the company perceived that prices for railroads in the United States had become too expensive, it turned to foreign lands where it sought opportunities in countries that wished to privatize their moribund rail lines or under-performing freight operations. By 2015 RDC had joined with investment partners on three continents—Africa, Europe and South America—and in such nations as Estonia, Mozambique and Peru. Some ventures have been money makers, others have not. Throughout its railroad involvements, the company, led by Posner and his able partner, Robert (Bob) Pietrandrea, always has done its due diligence before investing resources.

Its core corporate philosophy has remained a commitment to projects, seeking long-term investment gains rather than quick monetary returns. Another consistent theme has been its respect for local cultures and folkways and protection of the public interest. In philosophical terms Posner said it well: “I’m a capitalist with a conscience.”

RDC serves as a model for how a railroad investment and management firm, large or small, should function domestically and globally.