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Review of *Railwayman's Son: A Plains Family Memoir* By Hugh Hawkins

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years that bracket World War II would seem to offer us considerable common ground to explore in terms of everyday home life, school days, and church activities.

We would even find that a railroad ran through both of our lives. Indeed, being the son of a railwayman differed surprisingly little from my being the son of a translator for a large pharmaceutical company. For the Hawkins family the Rock Island Railroad was an abiding presence, but because the senior Hawkins was a station agent and dispatcher, not a conductor, fireman, or engineer, he lived a fairly regular life in terms of the demands of his job. Since for us "Uncle Eli Lilly" was also an abiding presence, I cannot conclude that being a railwayman's son was really much different from being the son of any father employed by corporate America in the 1940s and 1950s. In those days, however, being the son of a railroader did evoke the special glamour once attached to the enterprise. As historian H. Roger Grant explains in his excellent introduction, "For generations railroaders and their family members took pride in being associated with a dynamic, vital, even romantic American industry."

In the days of Hawkins's youth, the Rock Island Railroad was doing reasonably well financially. It was not the industry's financial basket case that it became in the 1970s and 1980s, when it finally collapsed and was dismembered. Thus the family life Hawkins recalls benefited from a regular paycheck and the prosperity of the Rock Island's good years.

Readers should enjoy this book more for what it tells about growing up on the Great Plains than for what it may reveal about family life in the context of the railroad industry. Actually, the book offers comparatively little about the Rock Island or any other railroad. Nonetheless, *Railwayman's Son* provides a valuable contribution to the literature of memory, Midwestern regionalism, and small-town America.

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Railwayman's Son: A Plains Family Memoir.
By Hugh Hawkins. Introduction by H. Roger Grant. Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2006. xxii + 196 pp. Map, photographs, index. \$24.95.

Railwayman's Son is a lovingly crafted memoir of growing up in small-town Kansas and Oklahoma during the 1930s and 1940s. For this reviewer, who grew up in small-town Indiana during the 1940s and 1950s, Hugh Hawkins's evocative recollection inspired a flood of memories. The author is professor emeritus of history and American studies at Amherst College. Though we have never met, and though the particulars of Hawkins family life differ noticeably from mine, the process of coming of age in a Midwestern town in the