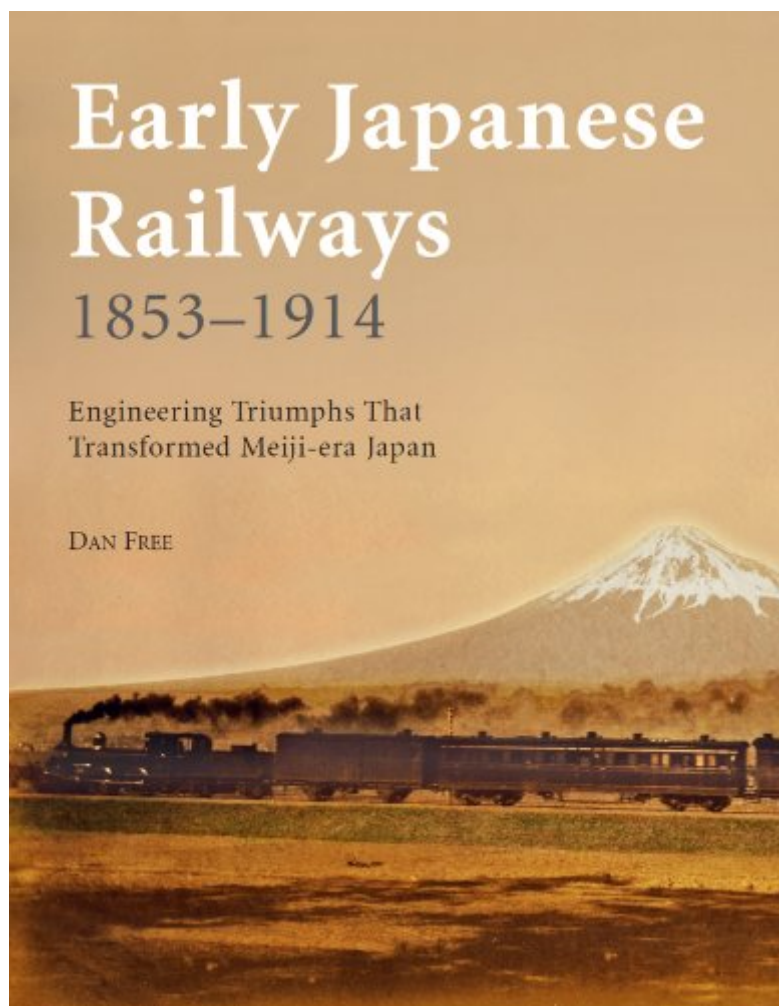




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Early Japanese Railways 1853-1914: Engineering Triumphs That Transformed Meiji-era Japan



Synopsis

Early Japanese Railways 1853-1914 is a cultural and engineering history of railway building in Japan during the Meiji era. The importance of early railways in the industrialization of the United States and Europe is a fact all of us are familiar with. To witness the amazing parallel development of the railways in Japan, happening at much the same time as America was connecting its vast hinterland to the East and West coasts, is an eye-opening realization. Early Japanese Railways, tells the fascinating story of the rise of Japanese rail amidst a period of rapid modernization during Japan's Meiji era. Leaving behind centuries of stagnation and isolation, Japan would emerge into the 20th century as a leading modern industrialized state. The development of the railways was a significant factor in the cultural and technological development of Japan during this pivotal period. Free's rare photographic and historical materials concerning Japan's early railways, including a print showing the miniature steam engine brought to Japan by Admiral Perry aboard his "Black Ships" to demonstrate American superiority, combine to form a richly detailed account that will appeal to students of Japanese history and railway buffs alike. This one-of-a-kind book, Early Japanese Railways 1853-1914, illuminates for non-Japanese-speaking readers the early history of Japanese railroads and in the process the fascinating story of Japan's prewar industrial modernization. Anyone interested in train history or model trains will find this book a fascinating read.

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Customer Reviews

This book goes into very fine detail of the history and production of the early Japanese railways. Purchased for the historical aspects and must say that a train /railways enthusiast will love this book. Finally available in paperback, the author spent over twenty years compiling the information presented and I must applaud him for his dedication and obvious love for the topic. The book is full of rare photographs from the time period and believe that a lot of the information is not found anywhere else. Makes a fine addition to the library of Japanese History and/or railways lore.

Fantastic book on the early days of Japanese rail. Very informative and full of great pictures with very good captions (lacking in many books like this). A must purchase for anyone interested in Japanese rail. I hope the author continues with more books taking us up to the present day!

I can't imagine why the author permitted his hard work to be published in such tiny type. It is impossible to read in comfort. It looks like a watch warranty.

Helped me a lot with a research project as it is a bucket of information on the birth of the railway system in Japan.

Excellent book, fast delivery

I was kind of excited to read this book. But I only made it a few pages in before noticing that the author used an alternate method of referring to years. Instead of BC, the author wrote BCE. Since there is no compelling academic reason to use this recently invented abbreviation; I find it annoying, distracting, and somewhat offensive. It shifts the focus from railways to the author's attempt to revise the history of the world itself. I stopped reading at that point.

Dan Free is a lifetime student of Japanese culture and trains. A literary Johnny Cash who found his way to Japan instead of the Rockies...This magnificent book is meticulously researched and exquisitely written. I just stumbled upon it and was very intrigued because trains is not something I

associate with Japan, being a neophyte...I just could n't put it down! We never think anymore about times when trains were the only means of communication and survival. Only a true passionate man could come up with such a work of art that is even poetic at times. Not to mention the amazing pictures he dug up...The man knew the first rule when you undertake such a daunting project...you won't get to the top unless you start at the bottom. Start at the bottom he did and to the top he got. A must for anybody!

This is a lavishly produced book, large format, illustrated with pictures from the period, most of which have never before been published. Many of these are postcards and a surprising number are in hand-tinted colour. There's also quite a bit of realia, including dining car menus. The text is erudite and intelligent, reflecting a good understanding both of Japanese history and railways. The author is American, which creates a few problems for the almost entirely British influenced Japanese railways of the period. Use of terms like mogul for a 2-6-0 would never have occurred on a British railway, in the wider sense of the word, and Japanese railways in the nineteenth century were British in much the same sense that Argentine or Australian railways were. He assumes some knowledge of railway terminology, which is totally reasonable for a book on this topic. The book's strengths are many and, for anyone interested in the topic, it is indispensable. It does have design flaws. The text is too small to make reading comfortable, and the caption and appendix fonts are ludicrously small. For a book this size there are too many words and too many illustrations. Fewer larger illustrations would have made for a better book and so would fewer words in a larger font. The book would have benefited from a serious edit. The early chapters could have been reduced to a few paragraphs. The lack of editing is also evident in some errors in the text. Even the dreaded it's as a possessive makes an unwelcome appearance. Beyer, Peacock and Company always has a comma. These are detail criticisms, however, and the book is strongly recommended. It is a model of how this important topic can be treated. Railways were immensely important in most countries in the second half of the nineteenth century and should form a more central part of historical discourse than they do. Dan Free has done scholarship a great service by putting railways at the centre of Meiji history and I, for one, applaud his efforts. I also look forward to similar books on the railway in other Asian countries.

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