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Book Review - Dixie Highway: Road Building and the Making of the Modern South, 1900-1930

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Off the SHELF

Dixie Highway: Road Building and the Making of the Modern South, 1900-1930 by Tammy Ingram (University of North Carolina Press, 2014, ISBN 978-1-4696-1298-0, \$24.95)

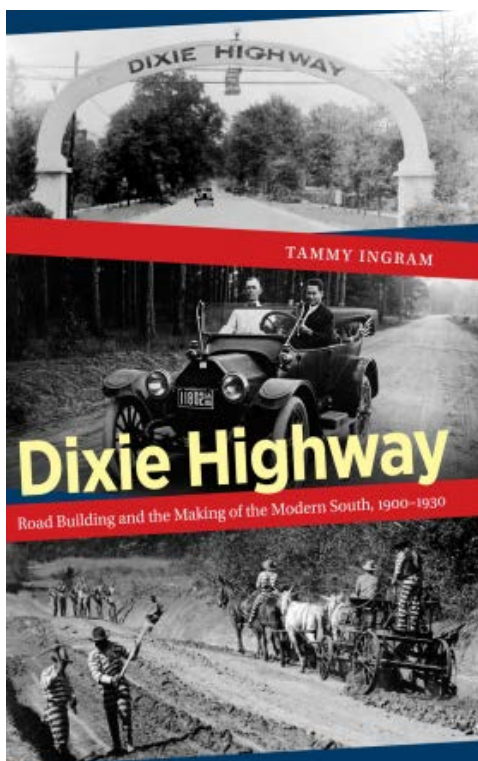
Tammy Ingram's *Dixie Highway: Road Building and the Making of the Modern South, 1900-1930* thoroughly documents the political, historical, and economic events surrounding the creation of the first North-South contiguous thoroughfare. Highlights of the book include historical photographs and maps of proposed and completed highway routes.

Ms. Ingram's account reveals the transformational shift in the attitudes of elected officials and the public towards road building before and during the implementation of this project. The results yielded far-reaching implications, with the formation of brand new federal and state highway agencies to oversee and manage the nation's demand for better roads. Prior to this, local or county agencies funded and directed road building. The book demonstrates the delicate but determined political grassroots orchestration required to launch a national road like the Dixie Highway.

When the idea for the Dixie Highway was born, dirt roads were the norm, and in rural counties many roads only existed to provide farmers access to rail depots. Due to their monopoly on travel, railroads charged farmers exorbitant prices for transporting goods, with the lack of

decent roads preventing any other viable options. Another impetus for developing improved roads grew from the rising auto industry, with the mass production and expanding ownership of automobiles.

The painstaking process of creating the Dixie Highway began as an extension of the Good Roads Movement led by progressive businessmen interested in promoting tourism between the Northern and Southern states. Ingram details the paradoxical situation of the post-Reconstruction era Southern states yearning for better roads while resisting outside control over local roads. The author devotes a chapter to discussing the role chain gangs played in modern road creation and maintenance in the South. This chapter delves into the perplexing mindset that could justify the continued use of convict labor over the purchase of modern, more efficient equipment.



The Dixie Highway eventually included nearly 6,000 miles of roads that incorporated multiple routes satisfying major contenders who vied to have the highway travel through their city. Most of the Dixie Highway in Georgia remained as dirt roads by the end of the 1930s. The highway eventually was replaced by the interstate I-75 with only two sections remaining, one immediately south of Atlanta. Foreshadowing the creation of the modern interstate system in the 1950s, Ms. Ingram tells of a young Dwight

Eisenhower impacted by the dirt roads while stationed in Columbus, Georgia.

Recommend for all academic libraries and all libraries with Southern studies, history, and political collections. Tammy Ingram is a native Georgian, and the book devotes much of its

contents to Georgia's role in the building of the Dixie Highway.

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