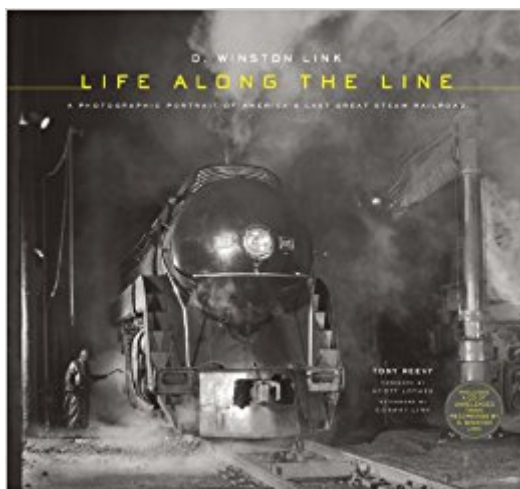


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# O. Winston Link: Life Along The Line: A Photographic Portrait Of America's Last Great Steam Railroad



## Synopsis

O. Winston Link photographed the Norfolk and Western, the last major steam railroad in the United States, when it was converting its operations from steam to diesel in the 1950s. Link's N&W project captured the industry at a moment of transition, before the triumph of the automobile and the airplane that ended an era of passenger rail service. His work also revealed a small-town way of life that was about to experience seismic shifts and, in many cases, vanish completely. Including a collection of more than 180 of Link's most famous works and rare images that have never before been published, *O. Winston Link: Life Along the Line* offers a moving account of the people and communities surrounding the last steam railroad. The book includes a cd of Link's recordings of the railroad.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

O. Winston Link (1914-2001) photographed the Norfolk and Western from 1955 to 1960. His brilliant black-and-white prints established him as an important American photographer, and many of his images have become modern classics. Tony Reevy, administrator at the UNC Institute for the Environment and advisory editor of *Railroad History*, is an author who has published two books and more than 100 poems and articles. He lives in Durham, North Carolina.

I've just skimmed through "Life Along the Line" and find it to be a superb book in all respects.

Added: I've spent more time with this book and have ordered another one for a family member as a

Christmas present. My opinion of the book is even higher than when I first wrote this review.... It's a superb volume. It's about railroading. Yet it's also an historical documentation of the passing of an era, the era of steam locomotion as it transitions quickly to diesel locomotion. It also documents the lives of many who worked for the railroad and who lived beside the railroad in small hamlets, isolated from much of the world at large. I quickly noticed the high quality matte paper. It has very little reflection to direct glare into my aging eyes. Much appreciated in this day and age of glossy books and magazines. As a photographer, I noted the incredible detail of the photos, the composition, the included backgrounds, the careful use of depth-of-field, the exquisite use of artificial lighting. This tome more than does justice to Link's skill and talent at taking photos. The reproduction is first rate. You'll find pleasure in viewing these photos more than once or twice. Link did a marvelous job of taking portraits of the people he met during the course of his years-long project. These are more than 'studio' portraits. They are portraits of the men and women in their element. Again, the photos are nearly perfect in every respect. They are not nameless faces. In nearly all photos, he has also documented their names and their locations. He shows his respect and enjoyment of all of the people he met and worked with during this project. The book includes a number of color photos taken by Link as well. Although color film was limited in many ways in those days, he again proves that he is the master of his medium. The CD is a great bonus, especially so because it matched each track with one of the plates included in the book. If you seek it out, there is a track listing near the back of the book that describes what you're hearing, track by track, and references the plate number of the photo taken where the recording was made. I was especially intrigued by the photos of Link and his equipment. He was able to use engineering training to an extreme extent in developing and customizing equipment needed for his project. I was glad that he and his assistants did indeed document themselves and their equipment. If you've viewed any of Link's works, you know that he worked largely at night so he could light a scene as he desired. As you peruse this book, take special note of the marvelous results he was able to achieve with his lighting. He is the Master of Lighting. Because he knew what he wanted and because he worked hard to achieve what he could see in his mind's eye... I urge you to look at this book, even if you're not a 'railfan' or a devotee of steam. The book is about an era that is now gone and can never be captured as it was by this genius. Just look at the book and savor the many elements that have been presented as a much greater whole. This book deserves a place in your library and deserves your time to read it again and again. I know I'll be back to read it many times.

I already owned "The Last Steam Railroad in America" and "Steam, Steel & Stars: America's Last

Steam Railroad," and I took the chance that this book would have enough new material to be a worthwhile purchase. I have been pleasantly surprised. The author of this book does a good job chronicling O. Winston Link's journey of capturing the places, people, and machines of the N&W railroad's twilight of steam operation. While there are duplicate photographs in this book, there are many new photos I have not previously seen. A very valuable bonus is the CD with his audio recordings. I feel that this book has been a welcome addition to my collection.

For readers that are train buffs and fans of Winston Link's work, this is the best collection and narrative I have seen to date. Not only are there some new photos that have been unpublished before, but the narrative is very well researched and clearly written. The final chapter is written by Mr. Link's son, who gives us a vivid picture of the personal side of the photographer, including the story of how his ill-fated second marriage ended in the destruction of much of his work. Do not miss this book. It will stay with you, both in heart and spirit.

I have the other two of Links pictorial histories of the N&W and this followup edition is fantastic reading as it explains more background on the pictorial history he made of this steam railroad which ran right behind my house. I would recommend this to anyone who likes railroad history. The book is divided into sections which makes it much easier to assimilate. I was so into this book I read it in two days!

This book has 240 pages, (twice the OWL books "Steam, Steel and Stars" and "Last Steam Railroad in America") with about 190 pages of crisp black and white and color photos and best of all, they are previously unpublished, although a few of them are on-site variations of photos in the two previous books. There is a chapter on "How it was done" that shows setup and equipment used. +++There is a CD of sounds that were made at the location of the photo. If you play the CD in your automobile, be careful...you might feel like you are about ready to be hit by a train and watch the volume too. The book was the handy work of several volunteers and staff of the O. Winston Link Museum in Roanoke, VA

Wonderful photos and written text about a long gone but much loved and remembered America. The Locomotives and people who lived and worked along the railroad made this country what it was and will never be again. A steam locomotive is a perfect metaphor for America strong, muscular all business capable of any task. Those who worked on them loved them and it shows. Every time I

look at O. Winston Link's work I am in awe of his craftsmanship, and forever thankful of his love and dedication to the task which he undertook with love and perfection. To look at this work and not get a little choked up is impossible.

I admit to being a bit of a train buff. I was familiar with Winston Link's work and this book did not disappoint. His more famous photographs are included, but there are prints I had not previously seen as well. It is a very comprehensive collection. The reproductions are of superb quality and the paper is thick. Anybody who knows what Mr Link attempted to do understands that he captured the last moments of steam trains without benefit of digital technology. This book shows how he used lighting techniques to ensure he got it right. Thanks to him, we can reflect on something we have lost. Not only do we not have these incredible engines, but he also caught the small general stores prior to their demise. He lets us remember a time when kids could go, unwatched and unattended, to a swimming hole in the evening. This book appeals to a broader market than those who enjoy steam engines.

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