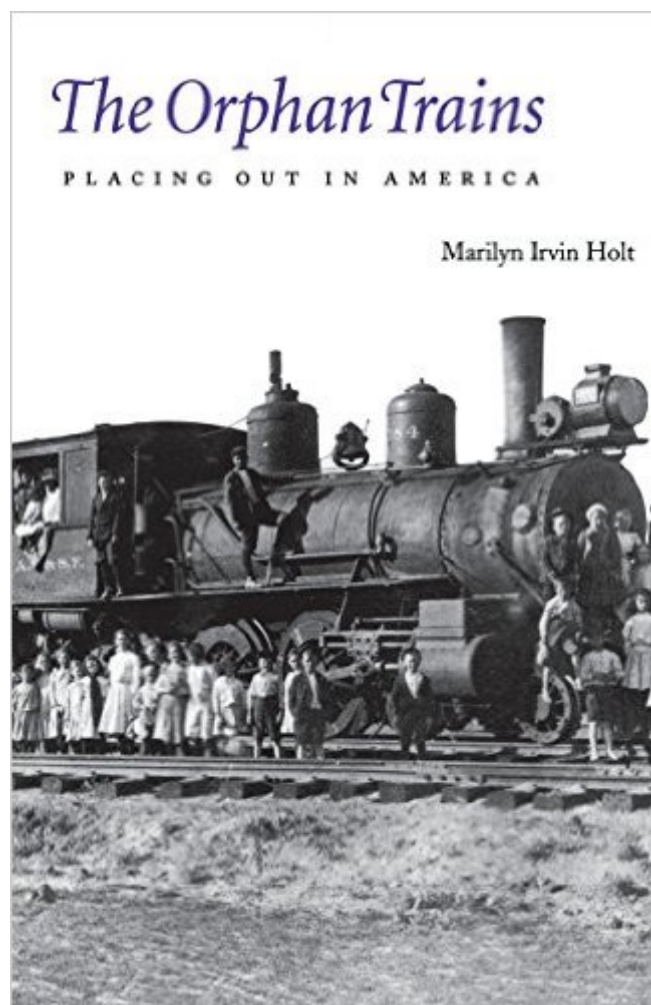


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The Orphan Trains: Placing Out In America (Bison Book)



Synopsis

"From 1850 to 1930 America witnessed a unique emigration and resettlement of at least 200,000 children and several thousand adults, primarily from the East Coast to the West. This 'placing out,' an attempt to find homes for the urban poor, was best known by the 'orphan trains' that carried the children. Holt carefully analyzes the system, initially instituted by the New York Children's Aid Society in 1853, tracking its imitators as well as the reasons for its creation and demise. She captures the children's perspective with the judicious use of oral histories, institutional records, and newspaper accounts. This well-written volume sheds new light on the multifaceted experience of children's immigration, changing concepts of welfare, and Western expansion. It is good, scholarly social history."-Library Journal Marilyn Irvin Holt, former director of publications at the Kansas State Historical Society; is a freelance editor, writer, and researcher and teaches historical editing at the University of Kansas.

Book Information

Series: Bison Book

Paperback: 264 pages

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Customer Reviews

The book contains a history of the out placement movement as well as of it's founder Charles Loring Brace and others involved. Holt examines romantic and realistic notions of placing outplacement based on overpopulation of poor children in urban centers like NYC coupled with need for cheap labor in the rural west. She provides the roles of the New York Children's Aid Society and many other charitable institutions. It might be the best book on the sociology of urban life since Dickens. It's certainly the best view of 19th century American urban and rural life of poor children that I've read. I found the question of indenture status of the children very interesting. The book contains

instances of indenture, adoption and more often neither. Legal status seems to have been very nebulous. It was never institutionalized, which may have been a factor in the demise of the outplacement movement. During the history of the outplacement movement, did the kids get the benefit of good homes or where they exploited as cheap labor? Holt is realistically ambivalent, giving an excellent presentation of all issues from start of the movement in about 1853 to its conclusion in 1929. There's individual success stories as well as examples of failure and abuse. Her book is applicable to modern sociology in analysis of benefits and why did the movement stop? It examines the increasing government role in poverty mitigation after about 1929. The sewing machine changed the garment industry in the late 19th century, creating a need for young seamstresses in both urban and rural environments. 1912 saw the first National Children's Bureau and initiation of careers in social work. There is a very interesting analysis of the reasons for the close of the movement in 1929.

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