



Just Fine the Way They Are
From Dirt Roads to Rail Roads to Interstates
(Calkins Creek/Boyd's Mills Press, March 2011)
By Connie Nordhielm Wooldridge
Illustrated by Richard Walz

Mr. John Slack, the keeper of a tavern beside a rutted dirt road in the early 1800s, thought things were just fine the way they were. So did Lucius Stockton, who ran the National Road Stage Company in the mid 1800s. So too, did the owners of the railroads when the first Model T appeared in 1908. Yet with each new innovation, Americans were able to move around the country more quickly, efficiently, and comfortably. Connie Wooldridge offers an informative, yet light-hearted look at how the dirt roads of the early 1800s evolved into the present-day U.S. Highway system. Richard Walz's richly-rendered paintings capture both the broad sweep and the individual impact of change and progress.

Excerpt

“But most folks didn't agree with John Slack's bad opinion of the National Road. Most folks thought it was a real fine thing. They thought it was the Main Street of America, where ideas and people and things to sell moved back and forth across the country. Living near the National Road was pure excitement.”

Review

“Wooldridge's story of America's land-transportation networks—its roadways and railways—is folksy but panoramic. The informal, affable tone, something like a movie voice-over, works well here, conveying a sweeping amount of material—over a lot of ground and 200 years—as it chugs merrily along, hitting the high points, while Walz provides heroic imagery with a Thomas Hart Benton tang. Fittingly, the story has got real rhythm to it, helped along by the refrain—‘Things were just fine the way they were,’ thought those who benefited from a soon-to-be-diminished carrier—but most of all by capturing the surging, ever-evolving nature of the country's transportation network. - Kirkus Reviews, February 15, 2011

The Author

Connie Nordhielm Wooldridge has written and published 5 non-fiction picture books for children, a young adult biography *The Brave Escape of Edith Wharton* (Clarion Books, August 2010), as well as articles and stories for Highlights for Children and Cricket.

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