



Virginia Blue Ridge Railroad, The (Transportation)

Mary E. Lyons

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In 1849, Virginia began a bold railroad expansion toward the Ohio River and its lucrative trade connections. The project's plan covered 423 miles and called for piercing two mountain chains with three railroads. The Blue Ridge Railroad was the shortest of these but crossed the most mountainous terrain. At times, hired slaves, who prepared the tracks, and Irish immigrants, who blasted the tunnels, faced challenges that seemed almost insurmountable. Many were killed by explosions and falling rock. Those deaths often resulted in labor strikes. The unrest slowed progress and haunted chief engineer Claudius Crozet for seven years. In this first full-length history of the Blue Ridge Railroad, award-winning author Mary E. Lyons uses a wealth of historical documents to describe construction on what Crozet called "dangerous ground."

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