



# Southwest Virginia's Railroad: Modernization and the Sectional Crisis

*Kenneth W. Noe*

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## **Southwest Virginia's Railroad: Modernization and the Sectional Crisis** Kenneth W. Noe

This innovative look at antebellum Southwest Virginia disputes traditional Appalachian scholarship, which has maintained that industrialization in the area occurred after 1880. Kenneth Noe shows how mountain modernization began decades earlier, with a regional railroad that contributed to support for secession and the Confederacy. Combining an adept use of anecdote and detail with analysis of the written record, Noe shows that many supporters of the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad viewed it as a political tool, believing it would spread slavery and unite the state. He focuses on the railroad's economic fruits - integration of the region into the tobacco kingdom, urbanization, a growth in industry, and the spread of slavery - and shows how these brought about political results. By 1860, the author argues, the railroad had indeed increased the region's dependence on slavery, deepened its immersion in the capitalist marketplace, and strengthened its ties to the state capital.

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