



# Superpower: The Making of a Steam Locomotive

*David Weitzman*

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## **Superpower: The Making of a Steam Locomotive** David Weitzman

Superpower tells with beauty and precision how the most powerful steam-engine train ever made was designed and built in the 1920s.

Ben is just eighteen when one day, in 1925, he goes to work with his father and grandfather at "the Loco" in Lima, Ohio. But he is soon caught up in a marvelous adventure-the building of a new locomotive, the first Berkshire, one of the most powerful and efficient ever.

The apprentice meets engineer Will Woodard, who explains the dilemmas and niceties of locomotive design. In the pattern shop, Ben see Woodard's blueprints turned into finely-crafted wooden pattern for castings of iron and steel. From Marko Ukropina, an "old country" foundryman, Ben learns the secrets of pouring the massive frames (and to be more careful around white-hot steel). He follows the rough castings to the machine shop, where they are planed smooth and true. In the forge, Ben joins a team of hammermen wrestling a glowing steel ingot under the ground-shaking steam hammer three stories tall-and realizes why only the biggest and brawniest men work here.

Superpower chronicles the building of a steam locomotive in meticulous detail. But there is more here-it is also the story of working men, many of them immigrants from all over Europe. It recalls a time when family members worked together, and when pride in craftsmanship was intrinsic to American life. Based on oral histories of Lima's workers and their families, Superpower is, most of all, a story of America at work.

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