

the Teamsters, whose successful organization would give labor control over not just trucking but much of the economic infrastructure of the city. Although the Alliance retreats during the 1934 Teamsters strike and the CIO organizing drive of 1935–1937, they recover much of their lost ground in the late 1930s by launching a public relations drive against union radicalism, redoubling their political efforts, and nurturing jurisdictional spats between the AFL and CIO. The final victory comes with the passage of the Minnesota Labor Relations Act of 1939, a check on union power that provided the template for the federal Taft-Hartley Act in 1947 and served to “stabilize a conservative union bureaucracy and isolate the union movement from the threatening leadership of the country’s radical movements” (362).

This is an immensely important book. The core narrative helps us make sense of the transformation of urban politics and labor relations through the first half of the twentieth century. The long history of the Alliance details the myriad ways (in local and state politics, in local journalism, in education, in law and law enforcement) that business interests wielded political and cultural power. Perhaps most importantly, Millikan’s prodigious research (largely using the Alliance’s own records) offers both a compelling case study and a model for future research regarding what is arguably the most important but least investigated question of American political history: how, in a notoriously business-dominated political system, is business power organized and exercised?

The Sanitary City: Urban Infrastructure in America from Colonial Times to the Present, by Martin V. Melosi. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000. xii, 578 pp. Illustrations, tables, graphs, notes, bibliographical essay, index. \$59.95 cloth.

Reviewer Maureen Ogle is a historian from Ames. During her career in academia she wrote extensively on the culture and technology of urban America, including *All the Modern Conveniences: American Household Plumbing, 1840–1890* (1996). She now writes popular history for the trade press.

Flush the toilet. Turn on the shower. Yell at your kids to wipe their feet, and carry on a conversation with your spouse at the same time you’re taking out the garbage. Mindless but necessary tasks we carry out so automatically that they’re usually over and done with before we even realize we’re doing them. That’s the beauty of contemporary urban life and the highly regulated service city: as if by magic, water runs, garbage vanishes, wastes disappear down the toilet and out of sight. (Unfortunately, the kids still need to be told to wipe their feet.)

In his new book, Martin V. Melosi has catalogued the chronology of these three services—water supply, sewerage, and solid waste management (the term preferred by historians and engineers; “garbage collection” to the rest of us)—in American cities. Like most urban historians working in the United States, Melosi leans heavily on sociology and theory and fits in history only if there’s room for it, so the book presents lots of facts but not much in the way of historical analysis. That’s not necessarily a bad thing. As he points out in his lengthy introduction (a delight for readers looking for theory and bibliography, but a rather dull stew for the rest of us), no one has ever gathered the facts of all three major American sanitation “systems,” so this massive compendium contains a dizzying array of dates, names, and descriptions, including plenty of examples from Iowa cities, much of it presented for the first time.

Although Melosi surveys the situation from the colonial era to the present, it’s clear that he’s primarily interested in stuff that looks like what we have now: “modern” water, sewer, and waste systems rooted in “real” science and developed, designed, and managed by professional engineers. He provides readers with a blow-by-blow discussion of the who, what, when, and where of these systems after about 1880. The book is particularly strong for the second half of the twentieth century; Melosi outlines what happened when a growing population, more disposable income (and hence more “stuff”), an increasing awareness of “ecology,” and a demand for more government regulation collided.

Much of his discussion of the pre-1880 period focuses on various developments in Europe and England and how they affected certain reform-minded individuals living in the United States. When he does get down to describing these early urban technologies, more often than not he dismisses all but the two or three largest water works as “proto” systems and therefore not terribly important. That’s too bad: technology reflects the culture of the people who create it, and he missed a fine opportunity to analyze and explain why those systems functioned the way they did and why people remained satisfied with them for so long. (There’s a reason why Americans didn’t simply glom onto British notions about sanitation, reasons rooted in the vast differences between the two nations.) He lost an opportunity, in other words, to show readers how technologies are shaped by specific cultures in specific times and places. Alas, that’s what usually happens when historians substitute sociology for history.

Given how much information Melosi packed into the book, perhaps he shouldn’t be faulted for skipping the early period or for leav-

ing out the history, although it would have been nice to know, for example, why nineteenth-century Americans stuck with "primitive" waste disposal even after the British developed rather different alternatives. It's harder to understand why he left out plumbing, which is neither listed in the index nor mentioned in the book. It's as if it doesn't exist in the city in Melosi's mind, and yet plumbing is as much a part of urban infrastructure as streets and sewer pipes, privately installed, but regulated down to the last washer and gasket by an almost annoying array of municipal ordinances.

But perhaps that's quibbling. *The Sanitary City* is an impressive achievement: a massive compendium packed with facts, figures, and a stunning array of illustrations: tables and graphs, period photographs, plans of specific city sewage systems, and so forth. If it's a bit short on history—well, there's plenty here for the historian who wants to tackle the big task of explaining why our cities look and function as they do.

Merry Christmas! Celebrating America's Greatest Holiday, by Karal Ann Marling. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000. xii, 442 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$27.00 cloth.

Reviewer Jack Santino is professor of folklore and popular culture at Bowling Green State University. He is the author of several books on ritual, festival, and celebration, including *All Around the Year: Holidays and Celebrations in American Life* (1994).

Merry Christmas! Celebrating America's Greatest Holiday is a treatise on certain customs associated with the American Christmas celebration, primarily since the mid-nineteenth century, focusing chiefly on their commercial aspects. Magazine advertisements and illustrations are the most common sources of data, along with some textual analysis of Christmas songs and films. Although much of the discussion is interesting, there is little that is actually new; the author mines familiar veins, such as the history of the Santa Claus figure, the Christmas tree, and the contributions of Charles Dickens and Washington Irving to Christmas observations. Throughout, the author assumes that readers celebrate Christmas, and celebrate it more or less as she does. Not until chapter 7, "Somebody Else's Christmas," does she discuss Hanukkah and Kwanzaa, and then only briefly.

In the preface, author Karal Ann Marling states, "This is another one for the moms!" (xi). In fact, it is not clear who the book is written for. Written by an art historian and published by Harvard University Press, it contains the footnotes and citations we expect in a scholarly book, and the text sometimes employs scholarly language and con-

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