

farms appear to be overrepresented and Iowa farms possibly underrepresented. A second general criticism is that more could have been done to exploit the linkage between farm and personal or household characteristics that is one of the attractive features of the sample. The study is too much confined to series of separate examinations of farms or rural households. More use could have been made of the sample to report on interactions. For example, how many of the small farms were operated by older farmers as quasi-retirement plots? Or, did farmers born and raised locally have advantages, or even just differences, in comparison with immigrants? Any criticisms aside, though, this is a major, valuable contribution to agricultural history.

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY, CANADA

R. M. MCINNIS

*The Countryside in the Age of Capitalist Transformation: Essays in the Social History of Rural America*, edited by Steven Hahn and Jonathan Prude. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985. xi, 355 pp. Notes, maps, tables, illustrations, index. \$36.00 cloth, \$9.95 paper.

The editors of this substantial book provide a meaty introduction and ten interesting chapters arranged under three geographical headings—"The Northeast," "The South," and "The West"—with a single essay as finale to introduce the reader to "The Countryside after the Great Transformation." The volume, Hahn and Prude inform us, is a substantive introduction to the "breadth and possibilities of the new rural history" (7). Although by no means completely repudiating Turnerian insights or older varieties of agricultural history, the editors emphasize the importance of viewing rural life as "one dimension of broad social and economic transformations, that in different forms and degrees, affected *all* of American society, and by seeing rural and urban history as distinct but linked aspects of, for example, the spread of market relations or the variegated process of industrialization" (9). Such perspectives, they believe, should be developed within a world perspective, rather than a mere national setting, and by analysis not only of market-based phenomena but of resistance to them as well. In an acknowledgment of debt to the late Herbert G. Gutman, the editors note that they share "his long-standing insistence that the history of labor form part of the larger history of capitalism in the United States, and that the history of capitalism embrace the country as well as the town and city" (xi).

Prude and Hahn have indeed edited a broad-ranging collection. The essays provided for the Northeast by Gary Kulik, Thomas Dublin, Jonathan Prude, and David Jaffee investigate controversies between

Rhode Island farmers and mill builders during the eighteenth century; the making of palm-leaf hats under an outwork system in a New Hampshire town, 1830–1850; conflicts between textile mill proprietors and rural interests in southern Massachusetts; and the business and significance of portraitists in the rural North, 1760–1860. Southern perspectives introduce the reader to the conflict between traditional culture and moral economy and postbellum market forces in the South Carolina low country, as analyzed by John S. Strickland; to Steven Hahn's interpretation of the development of commercial cotton agriculture in the Georgia upcountry, 1860–1890; and to a reassessment of the "(agri)cultural origins" of the Texas Farmers' Alliance by Robert C. McMath, Jr. The next major section includes a case study of community-building processes in central Illinois by John M. Faragher, one by Kathleen N. Conzen dealing with generational succession in a Minnesota community dominated by German immigrant farmers, and a broad-ranging study of the use of ethnic labor on the far western frontier fringe by Howard Lamar. Hal S. Barron concludes the volume with an examination of Chelsea, Vermont, during the late nineteenth century, after the great migration of its sons and daughters to the West or to urban America.

Excepting only Lamar, who has enjoyed a long and distinguished career in the field of western history, the authors published their first books in the late 1970s or the 1980s. They represent a new generation of historians of the countryside, and they have produced a very important book. The debates that it will provoke cannot help but have a vitalizing influence on the field. Twenty years ago words and phrases like transformation, transition, precapitalist, protoindustrial, resistance, moral economy, consumerism, and republican yeoman values would not have figured so prominently in a collection of local studies. From some of the contributions there emerges a picture of a precapitalist rural populace dedicated to republican values, trading labor, paying in kind, restricted in dependence upon the market, and often resistant to commercial impulses. Ostensibly, the capitalist transition changed such relationships drastically. Obviously there are new emphases here, and new concerns. The realization that "rural" encompasses both farmers and nonfarmers and the effort to incorporate an understanding of family processes and the importance of the household into the fabric of agricultural history can only be beneficial. Conzen's suggestion (259) that the interest of historians in this field has been excessively concerned with technology, income, and status is justified.

The book will provoke some mixed feelings in the minds of members of the small but dedicated band of historians who have long worked in agricultural history. Clearly the new vocabulary introduces

some problems of definition. When does a transformation begin and when is it completed? Is it not essentially an exercise in redefinition to argue that capitalism was effectively absent in any of the settled regions of the United States in the nineteenth century? On the other hand, if the wage relationship is vital to the definition of a capitalist agriculture, as Kulik suggests (28), that status must have been long deferred—perhaps not even yet arrived—on many farms. Perhaps the best research strategy is to identify basic economic and social processes, following their histories through time and relating their significant interrelationships without worrying too much about crossing magic thresholds into capitalism or a market economy.

Granted that positing antinomies is more analytical than pure narrative, it is still very crude analysis and sometimes quite misleading. Is spatial or vertical mobility necessarily a polar opposite to community sense or structure as these have actually existed in rural America, and has commercial agriculture inevitably been destructive of a sense of community or of family values? Is anomie really the antithesis of community or should it more properly be considered as a condition that varying numbers of local residents within communities may be experiencing at any given time? Granted that the concerns of the *Annales* scholars, of E. P. Thompson, and other gurus of the new social history should be much in the mind of rural historians, to what degree should their practices set American agendas? Granted also the importance of the research questions posed here, are the analytical methods appropriate ones? Usually the answer is "yes," but sometimes, as in the essay on the South Carolina low country, perhaps not. Most of the essays in this volume are case studies, which inevitably raises the question of how far it is appropriate to generalize their findings or conclusions. Doubts about such matters will make some readers more comfortable with essays like those of Conzen, Lamar, Barron, or McMath than with the work of the authors whose theory is more elaborate, obvious, and, perhaps, doctrinaire. But let there be no mistake; this book belongs on the shelf of every scholar who is interested in the agricultural sector of American life and may, as well, contribute significantly and constructively to the task of reasserting the importance of the rural dimension in American development.

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN—MADISON

ALLAN G. BOGUE

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