

### Book Reviews

club teetered toward bankruptcy. As president of the board of the Ames Country Club, A. V. gladly helped "rescue the club where all of us had enjoyed good times." If not acquiring great wealth, Swanson nevertheless achieved substantial financial security and social acceptance among his Anglo-American neighbors.

The author supposes that Swanson's success in becoming an immigrant Babbitt sprang from his "thoroughly American confidence in himself," his ability to exploit opportunities that came his way, his quick grasp of the capitalist system, and his "ability to make friends easily and quickly." When the author seeks explanations beyond her father's American character, luck, and pluck, she argues a kind of cultural convergence—an American character forged in a Swedish childhood and youth. In his education, values, and ambitions Swanson was already a child of capitalism who needed only to leave behind the barriers and burdens of Sweden's rigid class structure to make good in the land of opportunity.

The author relies largely on personal memories to reconstruct her father's life. Beyond the clichés suggested there are few clues to help readers understand rapidly assimilated and upwardly mobile immigrants like A. V. Swanson. This biography appears to be more of an effort to legitimize the "Americanism" of the family than a search for Swedish origins. As such it may be of interest to historians interested in the family life and attitudes of the socially and geographically mobile, and in the mind of main street in the Midwest between the wars.

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JANE M. PEDERSON

*Understanding Herbert Hoover: Ten Perspectives*, edited by Lee Nash. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1987. xiii, 196 pp. Notes, index. \$21.95 cloth.

The essays in this anthology were the grist of three biennial symposia on Herbert Hoover at George Fox College, a propitious site considering the subject, between 1977 and 1982. Historians with unimpeachable qualifications are responsible for this eclectic collection of essays that spans Hoover's public life. It includes subjects as varied as the Quaker imprint on the "Chief" and the Indian policy of his presidency.

Half of the ten essays are represented as "handy distillations of central interpretations of Hoover's career," and the rest as "significant topical soundings that also contribute to an understanding of Hoover's major interests and commitments" (xi). Although not announced in the introduction, the collection has a definite revisionist cast with the writings of historians like Joan Hoff Wilson, David Burner, and Ellis W.

Hawley. Hoover revisionism is not monolithic, of course, and several species are exhibited.

The anthology is impaired by some familiar generic faults of execution and design. One example is the five-to-ten-year delay in publication of the symposium essays, with the predictable consequences. Although not necessarily novel, the essays addressed issues and had insights of immediacy when initially presented. Little in the anthology, however, has not by now become some kind of staple in Hoover historiography; and revisionism has progressed beyond the phase reflected in these essays. It is not simply that the collection can be viewed as somewhat passé, but that it has few perspectives that are not available and often stated with stronger cogency elsewhere. Even those essays with an anticipatory germ have been superseded. Later comparable writing, for example, by Gary Dean Best and George H. Nash is definitely superior to their essays in this volume. This anthology does not qualify, therefore, as a source of singular writings on Hoover.

Any of its limitations, however, could have been transcended with adequate context. Many essays contained once advanced revisionist notions and some striking interpretations, but the reader can merely ponder their significance in the absence of any explanation of the evolution of Hoover historiography. Among the advantages of the symposium format is that it affords a context that is often as instructive and riveting as the essays. That context, however, is only hinted at. The editor mentions, for example, that Burner and Hawley entered a "stimulating public dialog—nearly a debate—on their divergent viewpoints" (xii) at the 1980 symposium, but the reader is spared the details. Conveying a sense of the symposium context could have been didactic, earned grateful readers, and invested the anthology with a unique feature.

These remarks are not intended to disparage the authors. Essays like these rescued Hoover from unjust ignominy and malicious judgment, and they were entitled to a better forum. A record of the symposia was fitting and could have had considerable utility, but this particular anthology has limited benefit to posterity.

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PATRICK G. O'BRIEN

*Harry Hopkins: Ally of the Poor and Defender of Democracy*, by George McJimsey. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987. xiv, 474 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$25.00 cloth.

George McJimsey, professor of history at Iowa State University, has provided the first major study of Harry Hopkins since Searle Charles's

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