

social, economic, and political life of her family, Jette belies the stereotype of an oppressed hausfrau. She lived the values of order, responsibility, and hard work that characterized the German professional and bureaucratic class from which she came. More than a record of events and activities, her letters present the proddings of the inner self in the face of both tragedy and joy.

*The Road to Rebellion: Class Formation and Kansas Populism, 1865-1900*, by Scott G. McNall. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988. xviii, 354 pp. Illustrations, map, tables, notes, bibliography, index. \$49.95 cloth, \$19.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY THOMAS BURNELL COLBERT, MARSHALLTOWN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

In surveying the literature dealing with Populist political agitation of the late nineteenth century, it seems that although interest in the Populists occasionally diminishes, it never seems to end. Indeed, it is an intriguing historical subject. Now Scott G. McNall, a professor of sociology at the University of Kansas, has added his name to the long list of scholars who have explored the realm of Populism.

What McNall attempts to do, however, is not to rewrite the history of Populism but rather to explain why the Populists did not create a class movement. McNall does not work from the older view of Populism associated with John D. Hicks's *The Populist Revolt* (1931), which presented Populism as a groundswell response to economic and political concerns. Rather, he uses the model of Populism developed by Lawrence Goodwyn in *Democratic Promise: The Populist Moment in America* (1978). Goodwyn believed that Populism should be seen in terms of movement formation, a democratic movement that suffered defeat. Goodwyn offered a model of stages of development for such a movement: in general, a large segment of society has socioeconomic grievances, so its members create an organization to represent their interests, which in turn helps to develop an ideology for their views, and that leads to concerted political action. Consequently, such a movement becomes, at heart, as much culturally as economically based. Unlike Hicks or Goodwyn, McNall does not attempt an encompassing narrative or analysis of Populism. Rather, he focuses solely on Kansas. He thus has produced a case study—but not necessarily a history—of Populism and Populists in Kansas. Instead of talking about a democratic movement, as Goodwyn did, he looks for a Jeffersonian class movement aborning in Kansas and seeks to explain its dissolution.

What McNall discerned in his examination of Populist activity in Kansas was that the movement generated itself too quickly. There was not enough time for class formation. Kansas farmers hurt by economic problems wanted immediate relief and change, and the obvious vehicle was political action. Consequently, McNall determined that the creation of the Populist party and its quick victories at the polls did not allow for the ideological development and group consciousness needed for the formation of a social class—as defined by McNall.

Assessments of McNall's study by historians knowledgeable about Populist and Kansas history should constitute mixed appraisals. For instance, McNall, unlike Goodwyn, argues that voting power was a tool Kansas farmers always realized they had, and therefore political endeavor was not a final step in development for Kansas Populists: it had always been part of their effort. As McNall writes, "I am arguing that the movement was always about politics—the desire to achieve power" (26). Many can agree with this statement. Likewise, he should be considered correct in pointing out that Great Plains farmers in Kansas differed from southern farmers. While southern Populists may have been reacting to the change from subsistence to capitalist farming, Kansas farmers were capitalists. They depended on technology and agricultural markets to make profits from their enterprise. What Kansas farmers wanted was "a capitalist system with none of the abuses of that system" (306). Furthermore, McNall's conclusion that the political dichotomy between local merchants and farmers was economically, not culturally, determined is acceptable. Kansas merchants, unlike their farmer neighbors, supported tariffs to keep less expensive foreign goods out of the market and feared that farmers' complaints and eventual political revolt frightened potential new investors from the state. And the list could continue.

On the other hand, if there is much that historians may embrace in McNall's study, what detracts from it? Perhaps the most serious consideration is McNall's approach to the subject: he is more concerned with applying (testing? imposing?) his theory of class formation on Kansas Populists than with exploring the depth and breadth of Populism in Kansas. Second, his research methodology elicits some questioning. While he lists many secondary sources (including most of the notable works on Populism but surprisingly excluding Norman Pollack's *Populist Response to Industrial America*) in his bibliography, he does not refer to any primary sources except for a few published documents and newspapers. And although thirty-six newspapers are listed, twenty-two are cited only once. Additionally, at times quotations are not documented, and statements are not well substantiated

by the sources. For example, when McNall writes that there is "evidence that many of those men and women who came to Kansas did so with no actual farming experience at all" (70), his reference is only one settler's remarks. Then, too, McNall's grasp of the general facts and milieu of late nineteenth-century America is weak at times.

McNall's study should be judged mainly, however, for how effectively it fulfills its intent—not so much for how closely it adheres to the canons of professional historical scholarship. On this score, again the views may be differing, but on the whole McNall does basically succeed in examining Kansas Populism in terms of the structure of class formation. Thus, when McNall argues that the Populist party in Kansas fell into the hands of professional politicians who led it to its demise, his concern is not *that* these men gained control but *why* they could do so. The answer for McNall is found in the circumstances and events that kept Populist farmers in Kansas from creating a "class for itself" (6).

*The Life of Herbert Hoover*, volume 2, *The Humanitarian, 1914–1917*, by George H. Nash. New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1988. xii, 497 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$25.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY LAWRENCE E. GELFAND, UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

The Herbert Hoover I remember from my childhood during the Great Depression was a heartless conservative, insensitive to the sufferings and deprivations of common people. Even my recollection of his likeness, not all that different from the photograph on the front jacket of this volume, suggests a stuffed shirt with a touch of arrogance. Yet historians have long been aware that Hoover directed massive relief programs during and after the First World War, programs responsible for saving literally thousands of civilian lives. Although the enormous hoard of records concerning those relief programs has been accessible for some time at the Hoover Institution at Stanford, California, George Nash may well be the first historian to mine those records and analyze their contents in sufficient depth when preparing this, his second volume of the biography of Herbert Hoover.

Nash's life of Hoover will doubtless remain the definitive biography of America's thirty-first president, at least for this generation. Although the project was commissioned by the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library Association, Nash has carefully maintained his scholarly detachment when using the abundant documentation. Yet he leaves no doubt as to his sympathies toward Hoover. In the previous volume, Nash traced the early life of the Iowa native, who was

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