

*Town Building on the Colorado Frontier*, by Kathleen Underwood. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987. vii, 181 pp. Illustrations, tables, maps, appendixes, notes, bibliography, index. \$24.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY PAULA M. NELSON, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-PLATTEVILLE

Grand Junction, Colorado, is Kathleen Underwood's hometown. In her book, *Town Building on the Colorado Frontier*, she proposes to "describe and analyze the frontier town-building experience" (xvii) and in so doing to establish the key characteristics present as a town passes from the frontier stage to one of stability and security. This is not a personal story or a narrative history of Grand Junction. Underwood instead uses the techniques of the new social history to analyze her home town. Although she does note that "townspeople were central" (107) to the development of towns, her focus is on the economic and social structures and the ways they change over time. Therefore, the book analyzes population distribution, marital structure, household composition, occupations over time, age and occupations of property holders, length of residence, affiliate networks, and other questions of interest to practitioners of the new social history. There are a number of graphs and charts to illustrate the analysis in the text. Several photographs from Grand Junction's early years help to personalize the story.

What Underwood has discovered about Grand Junction is probably typical of other frontier towns that made the transition to a stable community. The demographics of the town changed over time; the wealth of single men in the early days was replaced with an almost even sex ratio and the growth of families. Property ownership became more common as the transient nature of the population moderated and homeowners proliferated. Also, the business community and the occupational structure changed over time. The number of businesses increased and agents or managers for outside corporations became more important as the currents of business consolidation in the larger world shaped local patterns. The number of occupations also expanded as the town turned from the need for physical survival to the diversity that stability allows.

The most interesting chapter deals with the water issue in Grand Junction. Grand Junction was located in a dry county, so water supply was an important concern. Initially the Grand Junction Town Company supplied the necessary water, but public anger at high rates for water and the lack of fire protection led to a search for alternatives. The search occupied the town over a period of several years while townspeople discussed, sampled, and rejected a variety of alterna-

tives. The citizens of Grand Junction eventually voted to build a municipal water system. In the process they turned their backs on the original town company and on the independent water company, which was founded as an intermediate solution to the supply problem. Underwood argues that the conflict over water illustrates the process of maturation and growing confidence in the future of Grand Junction. It also illustrates some of the joys and stresses of town life as residents argued about their future and the competing visions they held for their town.

*Town Building on the Colorado Frontier* is not about persons but rather about processes. As such it likely will not interest general readers who want to know the story of Grand Junction and what it was like to live there. For those who wish to know how Grand Junction fits into the growing literature on town development, however, the book has much to say. Underwood develops several themes that are similar to those developed by other historians who have analyzed communities like Jacksonville, Illinois; Grass Valley, California; Seattle; or Trempeleau County, Wisconsin. The similarities she has found, Underwood hopes, will help to create the substantial generalizations necessary "to broaden our understanding of urbanization in the late nineteenth century" (xix).

*Garden City: Dreams in a Kansas Town*, by Holly Hope. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988. xv, 175 pp. Illustrations, maps. \$15.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY JON GJERDE, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT BERKELEY

"Leaving home" has left a deep cultural imprint on middle western society. Indeed, middle western literature of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries is almost preoccupied with the theme. Hamlin Garland, in *Main-Travelled Roads*, wrote of sons and daughters who left the farm only to return guilt-ridden, like Garland himself, to visit friends and relatives on their run-down farms. Central figures in Willa Cather's novels from Jim Burden to Claude Wheeler to Lucy Gayheart all leave home. Cather's characters reflected her own life. Living in Greenwich Village, she became wistfully nostalgic about a lost rural Nebraska world. Even Garrison Keillor, by forsaking his region, has transformed himself from the wry storyteller to the glib, urbane sophisticate.

Holly Hope's exploration of her lost dreams in Garden City, Kansas, renews the theme of exile and return. In part history, in part autobiography, in part journalistic inquiry of modern-day rural life, the

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