ments that rural women in the 1930s had little to complain of, proceeded to tell anecdotal stories to the contrary. "The women did not generalize about their experiences. They clearly recognized their own reality, but they were not willing to make general statements about this reality" (xx). Fink, herself, makes those general statements, extrapolating significance from actions against the backdrop of an impressive array of secondary sources but also with the clearly stated intention of debunking agrarianism. *Agrarian Women,* while it definitely and compellingly tells the reality of some rural women, cannot and does not tell the reality of all.

The Changing Image of the City: Planning for Downtown Omaha, 1945–1973, by Janet R. Daly-Bednarek. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992. xii, 292 pp. Illustrations, tables, maps, notes, bibliography, index. $37.50 cloth.

REVIEWED BY PATRICIA BURGESS, IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

Janet R. Daly-Bednarek's *The Changing Image of the City: Planning for Downtown Omaha, 1945–1973* will probably not change the minds of those who believe midwesterners are backward, but it shows that being a little behind the times is not all bad. Being slow to jump on the bandwagon (in Omaha's case of urban renewal) may prevent problems as well as cause them.

Daly-Bednarek has written a history of city planning in post–World War II Omaha, but she has placed that history in a larger context. Omaha is clearly tied to the Midwest; its meatpacking industry depends on the animals raised in Nebraska and surrounding states. Omaha also shares experiences, such as suburbanization and downtown decline, with many other cities. Moreover, Daly-Bednarek tells us about the city planning profession to illustrate in what ways planning in Omaha was representative. In constructing her history she calls on standard sources: secondary literature on urban history, city planning, and the Midwest; local, state, and federal government documents, reports, and records; and newspaper articles, among others.

The organization of *The Changing Image of the City* reflects Daly-Bednarek's doctoral dissertation, from which it came. The first and third chapters are overviews of city planning and the New Deal legacy respectively. Chapter two surveys thirty years of demographic, economic, and leadership change in Omaha. The fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters are the real meat of Daly-Bednarek's case study; there she discusses planning for a "traditional" city, a city "in

transition," and a "new" city. This approach of setting the context for the case study, then presenting the case itself is logical, but sometimes it weakens her arguments. The reader learning about planning in Omaha in 1966 may well have forgotten what changes had occurred in the city planning profession—or in the city of Omaha—by that time.

The story of postwar Omaha's experience with city planning is enlightening. Despite all the promotional rhetoric from Omaha's boosters about it being "progressive," the city was really quite conservative. City leaders clung to the concept of a "traditional" city long after Omaha ceased to be one. Once perception caught up with reality, there was another time lag before that reality was acted upon. Also, despite city planners' professional self-image as being public employees working for the public interest, city planning in Omaha was largely a private sector affair. City government was weak during much of this period, so civic leadership—and major planning documents—came from the business community. These two factors explain the focus of Omaha's planning. Efficiency, which meant infrastructure improvements, was the major goal; federal government programs were acceptable only when they furthered efficiency. Hence the city's repeated rejection of public housing and urban renewal. That has proven to be a blessing in disguise, however. Omaha does not have the derelict high-rise projects that so inhumanly housed the poor and minorities in other cities. When historic preservation became a virtue, Omaha had a usable building stock instead of large swaths of vacant land. And Omaha did eventually catch up. During the 1960s, Omaha's planning department gradually expanded its scope. With the collapse of the city's economic mainstay (the meatpacking industry) and a near-vacuum in leadership, conditions were set for the spark of dynamic one-term mayor Eugene Leahy to ignite a public-private partnership dedicated to creating in Omaha the ambience and amenities desired by its postindustrial labor force of educated professionals.

Daly-Bednarek's nicely written narrative is not without flaws. Her evidence does not entirely support her frequent statements about the importance of the Missouri River. Mayor Leahy's influence also seems overstated, given the other forces the author has set at work by the time he takes office. Also troubling is her discussion of city planning. She has relied extensively on Mel Scott's *American City Planning Since 1890* (1969), which ends too soon for any real discussion of "advocacy planning," a movement that infused the profession's literature—and to some extent its

practice—beginning in the mid-1960s. Finally, although Daly-Bednarek makes Omaha a midwestern city in some respects, she does not develop the geographical context as fully as she might have. It would have been nice to occasionally learn how city leaders and planners tackled similar (perhaps related) problems across the Missouri in Council Bluffs, Iowa, or downriver in Kansas City.

Despite its weaknesses, *The Changing Image of the City* is a welcome addition to the literature on both cities and the Midwest. Much of the research about cities has focused on the nation's largest cities or those in the East. Omaha is neither. One cannot assume that small and medium-sized cities are like big cities scaled down, or that midwestern cities are like their eastern counterparts. Thus Daly-Bednarek's work is important not in spite of examining Omaha but because it does so.

Geographical Inquiry and American Historical Problems, by Carville Earle. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992. xii, 555 pp. Illustrations, maps, tables, charts, graphs, notes, index. $49.50 cloth.

REVIEWED BY JOHN C. HUDSON, NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

There is no mistaking Carville Earle's intention that this collection of some of his earlier writings—fleshed out considerably with new and equally provocative essays—marks a turning point in the geographical interpretation of American history. He begins with a direct assault on disciplinary boundaries, casting aside the comfortable "historical geography" in favor of a more inclusive "geographical history," which encompasses the French *Annales* school as well as, apparently, the work of most historians. Earle describes the father of American historical geography, the late Andrew Clark, as "a geographical historian in spite of himself." In fact, Clark pursued what he called a "bi-disciplinary" approach to history and geography, rather similar to the program Earle advocates. Labels aside, Earle's own mastery of diverse bodies of literature makes it clear that disciplinary boundaries mean little in the age of social science history.

In these dozen independent but linked essays Earle demonstrates the original thinking that has been the hallmark of his work. Each case study is framed in historiographical context and, frequently, Earle propounds a new or revised answer to long-studied questions. Included are "Why Tobacco Stunted the Growth of Towns" (it was a high-value, low-bulk commodity sent to England

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