private institutional records that can seem so dry and one-dimensional. In Birk's hands, county administrators, welfare professionals and administrators, foster families, and children rise up from the pages of these records as real and interesting characters. Such research is time consuming and often tedious, but Birk makes clear its potential for building detailed depictions of local life. On that basis alone, this book should not be missed.

Planning Democracy: Agrarian Intellectuals and the Intended New Deal, by Jess Gilbert. Yale Agrarian Studies. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015. xv, 341 pp. Map, table, illustrations, appendix, notes, index. $45.00 hardcover, $30.00 paperback.

Reviewer Jon K. Lauck is past president of the Midwestern History Association, associate editor and book review editor of the *Middle West Review*, and adjunct professor of history at the University of South Dakota. He is the author of *The Lost Region: Toward a Revival of Midwestern History* (2013).

In recent decades, University of Wisconsin–Madison rural sociologist Jess Gilbert has frequented academic conferences and presented impressive papers on rural history, politics, policy planning, intellectual history, and midwestern history. His focus has been the hothouse environment of New Deal agricultural policy making and the myriad ways 1930s farm policy was constructed and implemented. Now comes his grand summary statement of all of this work in the form of a book in Yale University Press's Agrarian Studies series.

Gilbert's essential point is that historians have spent too much time examining the early stages of the agricultural New Deal, especially the Agricultural Adjustment Act, and have been seduced by the lingering power of the images captured by the Farm Security Administration. More important, Gilbert argues, were the large-scale planning efforts of the late New Deal, which have been largely forgotten. Gilbert hopes that a better understanding of these planning efforts will make grand national policy planning efforts easier in the future.

Gilbert's most impressive work focuses on his collective portrait of the key contingent of midwestern-born planners in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) who largely led the agricultural planning effort. With a nod to cultural Marxism in general and the work of Antonio Gramsci in particular, Gilbert sees these men as "organic intellectuals," policymakers who had emerged directly from the midwestern soil to construct farm policy for rural America. This argument is meant to rebut the work of Catherine Stock, who, in her book *Main Street in Crisis* (1992), pointed to the friction between local cultures in the Dakotas

and intrusive New Deal bureaucrats who were trying to issue orders designed to transform those local cultures. It is also meant to rebut the critics of "high modernism" more generally, those scholars who have highlighted the coercive actions of the state taken by central planning offices and who have more generally chronicled the abuses of local and traditional cultures by elite planners. The libertarian-tending editor of the Yale Agrarian Studies series, James Scott, is perhaps the best-known critic of the potential abuses of central states. (See, for example, Scott's *Seeing Like a State* [1999]).

Where Gilbert is most successful and makes his greatest contribution to this policy history debate is in drawing a clear distinction between the midwestern agrarian intellectuals in the USDA who were trying to preserve the traditions of the family farm by way of cooperative government action and another set of obnoxious and abusive central planners from urban backgrounds who aggressively dismissed midwestern agrarian thought and sympathies. Rexford Tugwell is Exhibit A for this latter school of thought. Against Tugwell, Gilbert points to men who grew up on midwestern farms and were swayed by Protestant reform impulses and attended midwestern farm colleges. He notes how their egalitarian sympathies were grounded in the midwestern family farm tradition, which made the Midwest, unlike the "industrializing urban North and the plantation South," a "substantially one-class society" where "the workers *were* the owners" (28, italics in original). Gilbert's treatment of the unique political and economic culture of the Midwest makes *Planning Democracy* a fascinating must-read by itself.

In the end, Gilbert paints a much more complex picture of the New Deal's agricultural policy world and a brilliant analysis of the midwestern farm boys who were once at center stage in the USDA, but his treatment of national planning is less convincing. How Washington-dominated central economic planning can be "democratic" always remains a bit of a riddle that his policymakers always seemed to muddle through. And there was, in fact, intense organic resistance to greater bureaucratic controls from Washington, as Catherine Stock has noted in her work. Anthropologist Tom Biolsi also recently demonstrated the intense resistance to New Deal agricultural planning in a case study of the South Dakota experience in a chapter in *The Plains Political Tradition* (2014). Biolsi's evidence of failure is the best indication available for why the later planning stages of the New Deal are generally forgotten. Regardless of the relative merits of national planning and how the New Deal experience might inform such policies, Gilbert's impressive research into the 1930s experience and, in

particular, his keen grasp of the role of Iowa and the Midwest in these past debates makes *Planning Democracy* a must-read for historians of the New Deal, regionalism, policy, and politics generally.

Amana Colonies, 1932–1945, by Peter Hoehnle. Images of America Series. Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2016. 127 pp. Illustrations, bibliography. $21.00 paperback.

Reviewer Abigail Foerstner is co-coordinator of the science journalism specialization at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism. She is the author of *Picturing Utopia: Bertha Shambaugh and the Amana Photographers* (2000).

Cedar Rapids photographer John Barry captured Lucille Schaefer Kraus dressed for church in the 1930s. Her floor-length calico, with a black shawl, apron, and cap reveres the legacy of her past as she gracefully embraces the new world of the Great Change in the Amana Colonies. Communal societies historian Peter Hoehnle, an Amana native, draws on photographs by Barry, trusted Amana leader William Noé, West Amana brothers Rudolph and Paul Kellenberger, and others to tell the story of the critical and often overlooked reorganization of life for people in the Amanas. In grand American fashion, the Great Change transformed their communal religious utopia into a for-profit corporation, designating ownership shares to colonists for their years of service and offering wages for farming, carpentry, baking, factory work, and all of the other colony jobs—10 cents per hour at first, as Hoehnle tells us.

Hoehnle's book documents in text and photo portfolios the rapid-fire pace of the Great Change from 1932, when Amana residents overwhelmingly voted for it, to 1945. The book shows how the colonies quickly offered a high school education to children for the first time and opened the doors to private businesses, scout troops, modern dress, and Amana's first newsletter. From a national perspective, the book fills a gap in the Midwest's depression-era history. We see the sweeping force of social and economic change and the faces of people who met it with dignity, courage, and determination to build a brighter future during one of the darkest periods of American life.

Anyone who visits the Amanas for family-style dinners and handcrafted goods soon learns how the Community of True Inspiration fled religious persecution in Germany in the 1840s and, in the 1850s, settled on 26,000 acres along the Iowa River to establish the seven villages of the communal Amana Colonies. Community kitchens fed the body, and 11 church services every week nourished the spirit.