

spite local protests, the Milwaukee and St. Paul Railway chose to build a bridge over the Mississippi outside the city. However, this does not mean the state was absent. Government worked in partnership with railroads, too. Similar questions might arise regarding the chapters on workers and women. Legal traditions and the political structure perhaps did not provide the sort of opportunities Morser suggests, but they did create a framework that forced these actors to find alternatives for political expression.

Readers would benefit from a clear regional map earlier in the book and a bibliographical note identifying archives and abbreviations from the notes, but these are minor issues in a cogent, well-crafted study that appropriately places government at the center of the western narrative.

For Labor, Race, and Liberty: George Edwin Taylor, His Historic Run for the White House, and the Making of Independent Black Politics, by Bruce L. Mouser. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011. xxi, 253 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$24.95 cloth.

Reviewer David Brodnax Sr. is associate professor of history at Trinity Christian College. His biographical article on Judge George Grover Wright appeared in the *Yale Biographical Dictionary of American Law* in 2009.

Decades before Shirley Chisholm, Jesse Jackson, or Barack Obama ran for president, an Iowan became perhaps the first African American to do so. The life of George E. Taylor has been largely forgotten in the century since then, however, in part because he was an outsider during his lifetime. Bruce L. Mouser's biography seeks to restore Taylor as an important figure in midwestern politics, a bridge between populism and civil rights, and an example of the alternative political paths explored by the black community.

Mouser has made extensive use of newspapers to write this biography, but other sources about Taylor still prove elusive; for instance, although the politician was married three times, the fate of his first two wives is unknown. Perhaps to compensate for this lack of evidence, Mouser also explores Taylor from a psychological perspective: his sense of being an outsider, his chronic feelings of betrayal, and his willingness to take risks through new locations, jobs, and organizations.

The story begins during the Civil War in La Crosse, Wisconsin, where Taylor was raised by a black foster family and became a pro-labor journalist and political activist in Democratic and third-party organizations. He largely ignored racial issues, though, until he moved in 1891 to Oskaloosa, Iowa, whose black population was 24 times as large as La Crosse's. There, Mouser argues, Taylor "narrowed his focus

from biracial cooperation to self-help issues important only within the black community" (58). In his search for the best platform to advance his ideas, Taylor operated the *Negro Solicitor* newspaper, joined numerous organizations, and regularly changed his political affiliations, in large part because he, like some other African Americans, felt that the Republicans were no longer dedicated to civil rights. In 1892 he served as Iowa's only black delegate to the Republican National Convention, but in 1896 he endorsed the Democratic ticket, and in 1904 he ran for president as the candidate of the National Negro Liberty Party (NNLP), which endorsed pensions for former slaves and an end to "class legislation." Taylor likely hoped, Mouser contends, to show that black voters could not be ignored or taken for granted, although he probably also knew that he was destroying his political career. The NNLP was so underfunded, though, that it could not even get on the ballot in Iowa or most other states. He was unable to attract black Republicans or Democrats or even to unify the black third-party movement; he was ignored or ridiculed by the press; and he received fewer than 2,000 votes. Taylor spent the last 15 years of his life in relative obscurity in Florida, working in journalism and black community organizations while avoiding direct political activity.

Ultimately, Mouser sees Taylor not only as a remarkable success story but also as a reflection of postbellum black politics. As African Americans debated voting allegiances and civil rights tactics, Taylor emerged as "one of the few who could fuse the language of labor agitator to that of Washingtonian 'uplift' and make it address the needs of the common folk" (154). By the time he ran for president, though, southern disenfranchisement and northern indifference meant that black voters, like his campaign, were largely ignored. He was also unable to overcome his marginal status within the black community, caused by his humble beginnings and rural, grassroots ideology. Finally, like many other African Americans, he eventually responded to racism by turning inward toward community institutions.

The mere fact that George E. Taylor ran for president is enough to make him a historical curiosity but not enough to warrant a biography unless there is more to the story. Mouser's short but thoughtful manuscript succeeds by enhancing our understanding of the complicated dynamics involving black elites, white laborers and farmers, and those who sought to build bridges between these groups. He also illustrates the historiographical links between scholarship on Populists and African Americans in Iowa. Furthermore, Mouser shows that in addition to Iowa's well-known cadre of staunch black Republicans, there were also vibrant groups of black Democrats and third-party supporters

who influenced the political discussion. His analysis would have benefited, however, from further explanation of how Taylor's racial ideology developed in Iowa, possibly by more closely examining other local black leaders and the political and cultural environment in Oskaloosa and Ottumwa. Additionally, because the book focuses on eastern and central Iowa, we are left to wonder about possible connections to western black Iowans such as Nodaway Valley farmers or Sioux City laborers. As Mouser himself admits, additional research in the archives of the State Historical Society of Iowa in Des Moines might have proved useful, but so might have a look further west. Finally, further explanation of why most African Americans remained loyal to the Republican Party would better show the obstacles that Taylor faced in his efforts to highlight other options. These issues aside, Mouser has written an excellent biography of a forgotten but important leader.

The Brilliant Bandit of the Wabash: The Life of the Notorious Outlaw Frank Rande, by Mark Dugan, with Anna Vasconcelles. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010. xi, 201 pp. Illustrations, notes index. \$22.95 cloth.

Reviewer John E. Hallwas is Distinguished Professor Emeritus at Western Illinois University. His books include *Dime Novel Desperadoes: The Notorious Maxwell Brothers* (2008) and *The Bootlegger: A Story of Small-Town America* (1998).

This biography of outlaw Frank Rande is a welcome addition to our understanding of nineteenth-century lawbreakers in the Midwest. Even though he was notorious in the 1870s and early 1880s, Rande has received no previous modern attention, other than a three-part newspaper series and a three-part magazine series a half-century ago.

The Brilliant Bandit of the Wabash is well researched, if narrowly focused, and provides long-needed information on Rande's background. Born in 1839 and raised in Pennsylvania, he left home at age 20 but soon rejoined his family, which had emigrated to Fairfield, Iowa, in 1860. The authors chronicle his two marriages, his several years as a trapper in Minnesota, and then his career of burglaries and killings (launched in Iowa but covering several states in the upper Mississippi valley) that stretched from 1871 until his capture late in 1877. Tried in Galesburg, Illinois, in 1878, and convicted of murdering a posse member at Gilson in that county (Knox), he was sentenced to life in prison at Joliet, where he was an unruly inmate. After attacking and almost killing a deputy warden on March 1, 1884, he was found hanged in his solitary confinement cell six days later, an apparent suicide.