

1966. He wasn't. The New York Bureau of Municipal Research expert Higgens-Evason mentions, without clarification, was his son.

Higgens-Evason raises a great number of incompletely explored topics, including the roles played by corporate attorneys turned state tax bureaucrats, the nature of American county government, and the signal importance of popular support for road building. All need more extensive treatment. *The Price of Progress* deserves a sequel.

Every Farm a Factory: The Industrial Ideal in American Agriculture, by Deborah Fitzgerald. Yale Agrarian Studies Series. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003. xi, 242 pp. Illustrations, tables, appendix, notes, index. \$45.00 cloth.

Reviewer Mark Friedberger is adjunct professor of history at Texas Christian University. He is the author of *Farm Families and Change in Twentieth-Century America* (1988).

Over the years, most scholars have taken an empathetic view of the difficulties of farmers. Much less attention was given to the forces that pushed the American population off the land and into towns and cities. Deborah Fitzgerald's fine monograph fills this gap. She is concerned with the crucial decade of the 1920s when agriculture and rural America were on their knees and when cities were enjoying an economic boom. It was in the twenties that agricultural visionaries offered the template of industrialized agriculture to rationalize farming and bring it to a more professional level. Industrialized agriculture had several elements: (1) it was dependent on machinery; (2) it required specialized knowledge, especially from economists and engineers; (3) skilled management was crucial; and (4) large amounts of outside capital were required to oil the wheels of enterprises. Not surprisingly, the introduction of industrial methods exacerbated tensions between the "farming as a way of life" and "farming as a business" camps.

Even in the "golden age of agriculture," the nearest most farmers got to an expert was to read a column in a farm paper. To be sure, many farmers depended on credit, and they used horse-drawn machinery, but most ridiculed "book farming." Management techniques such as "Taylorization," already common in industry, were unknown. In any case, virtually all farms depended on family labor, and drudgery was the watchword. The high inflation of the war years gave way to depressed conditions. Many farmers who bought high-priced land went bankrupt; banks, retailers, and farm service businesses also suffered. The farm crisis of the early 1920s gave an opportunity for modernizers to push the industrial template.

The phrase "farm boys made good" has long been employed to describe the upwardly mobile. Typically, they left the farm, attended a land-grant college, and then became technocrats who serviced agriculture in some fashion. Two Iowans—among many ex-farm boys in the early twentieth century—took this path and contributed to the cause of industrialized agriculture in the 1920s: Henry C. Taylor and M. L. Wilson. Taylor, born on a farm in southeast Iowa, eventually became a professor at the University of Wisconsin. As an agricultural economist, he helped bridge the divide between economics and farm management studies. Wilson is even more central to Fitzgerald's story. Born in Atlantic, Iowa, but raised on a farm, a graduate of Iowa State, Wilson moved to Montana in the teens and began a career in farming, extension, and government service. Wilson wanted to use the methods of business and industry to save agriculture mired in depression. He understood that the great variability in agriculture—from Midwest corn belt to California fruit belt—made the concept of transferability, so central to the industrial management ideal, less applicable to farming. In the corn belt, the Farmall tractor performed the role of mechanical workhorse; in the cotton belt, until a satisfactory picker was developed, mechanization remained on hold. In contrast, by 1920 Montana in the wheat belt was an ideal locale for experimenting with industrial agriculture and large machinery. There, the downturn had forced thousands out of farming. Most lived on mixed acreage small farms, which Wilson realized were unsuitable for the conditions of the region. He managed to obtain a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation to fund a number of experimental farms designed to test the industrialized farm ideal: mechanization, sophisticated management, input from experts—all supported by ample funding.

Wilson tried out his theories with varying degrees of success. The weather and mechanical and personnel problems often frustrated his efforts. However, he was able to formulate several firm criteria that were in stark contrast to the "farming as a way of life" philosophy. On the high plains, farms needed to be large—at least 800 acres; 3,000 were ideal—with wheat as the only crop. Such farms needed to be fully mechanized, with a minimum of human labor and substantial investment. In other words, Wilson believed that the future of farming lay with large operations. The small family unit was redundant, and the excess farm population needed to be employed elsewhere. Such conclusions were somewhat ironic in view of Wilson's corn belt origins and his later career during the Great Depression as a savior of the family farm.

Wilson was also involved in the use of American expertise to collectivize Soviet agriculture in the early 1930s—the most fascinating section of the book. The Soviets invited “experts” such as Wilson to advise them on the transformation of the Russian Steppes to collective wheat farms. Not only did the Soviets purchase thousands of American tractors and other types of machinery, but they also employed Americans to instruct Russian operators in their use. By all accounts, this phase of trying to industrialize Soviet agriculture was fraught with blunders. Interestingly, the political issues raised by collectivization made little impression on the American “experts”—mostly engineers—although Wilson apparently enjoyed his time in Russia and forged good relations with Russian colleagues.

Soviet collectives failed to bolster the reputation of industrialized agriculture. A similar negative aura surrounded the American experience in the twenties. Obviously, the timing could not have been worse—sandwiched between the farm crisis of the 1920s and the Great Depression of the 1930s. Farmers and their political allies pointed to the costs and consequences of industrialization—unfair competition, the exodus of farmers, the decline of small towns and the infrastructure of the countryside—and acted. In 1931, Kansas—a wheat state where industrialized agriculture was already established—instituted anti-farm corporation legislation. Indeed, the family farm lobby, which used industrialized agriculture as a whipping boy, remained in the saddle for most of the century and successfully put in place similar legislation as late as the 1980s.

As Fitzgerald shows, however, in this important addition to the literature, the large industrial farm could make a contribution. Generally, where the industrial template suited conditions, an entity such as Campbell Farms, which grew wheat over large acreages in Montana, performed efficiently.

Problems of Plenty: The American Farmer in the Twentieth Century, by R. Douglas Hurt. The American Ways Series. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2002. xiii, 192 pp. Index, bibliographical references. \$13.95 paper.

Reviewer Karen A. J. Miller is associate professor of history at Oakland University. A portion of her current research is devoted to political responses to the agricultural depression of the 1920s.

R. Douglas Hurt, former editor of the journal *Agricultural History*, has constructed a succinct but thorough overview of American agriculture in the twentieth century. His analysis is predicated on the idea that “American agriculture in the twentieth century is the story of farmers’

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