

the early history of the computer industry. It also diverts her from considering a wealth of collateral issues that are relevant to her central concern. Her discussion of the patent battle between Honeywell and Sperry Rand could have been the ground for discussing the meager role the patent system has played in the development of the computer industry. Her one-sentence recognition (412) of the essential role of public financing in advancing that process could have launched a more extensive look at why government planning worked so well in that case but not so well in other similar cases in Europe and, related to that, why the dominant U.S. electronics companies during the 1940s (IBM, General Electric, and RCA) had very little to do with the first generation of U.S. computer projects, which were financed by the Department of Defense and undertaken for the most part in universities. In a book of more than 400 pages concerned with the early history of the U.S. computer industry, one might reasonably have expected that Burks would have given more attention to these important topics.

Furthermore, I regret that Burks's desire to vindicate Atanasoff's claims to *inventive* priority seems to have led her to discount the *innovative* accomplishments of Mauchly and Eckert in taking a special-purpose prototypical computer at ISU and improving it over the next several years to generate an impressive family of pioneering machines: the ENIAC, the BINAC, and, ultimately, the UNIVAC, which, as Burks herself acknowledges (179, 198), was the first general-purpose computer made available for commercial applications. Despite his genius as an inventor, Atanasoff apparently did nothing after 1942 to develop his machine into a marketable product that industry could use. These last steps, so essential to realizing the full value of the computer, were to a large extent the work of Mauchly and Eckert. However dishonorable their earlier conduct with respect to Atanasoff, those moral lapses should not detract from the luster of their later achievements.

On the Farm Front: The Women's Land Army in World War II, by Stephanie A. Carpenter. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003. xvii, 214 pp. Illustrations, tables, notes, bibliography, index. \$40.00 cloth.

Reviewer Michael W. Schuyler is professor emeritus at the University of Nebraska at Kearney. He is the author of *The Dread of Plenty: New Deal Agricultural Policies in the Middle West, 1933-1939* (1989).

Most of the books that have been written about the lives of women in the United States during the Second World War have concentrated on women who served in the military or worked in defense-related industries. Little, if any, consideration is given to women who worked as

agricultural laborers during the war. This detailed history of the Women's Land Army (WLA) fills a void in existing scholarship by providing a thoughtful and comprehensive discussion of women who were recruited to work on the nation's farms during the war.

When farmers began to experience labor shortages, federal officials, including Secretary of Agriculture Claude R. Wickard, were reluctant to become involved in any form of labor recruitment and openly opposed the recruitment of women to work on the nation's farms. However, a number of states, including California, Oregon, New York, and Vermont, immediately began to recruit urban and rural women to work as farm laborers. By early 1943, the increasing severity of the farm labor shortage forced the government to develop programs that would guarantee farmers an adequate supply of farm workers. Consequently, in February 1943 the government began the Emergency Farm Labor Program. In what was intended to be a small part of the program, the WLA was created to recruit, train, and place women where they were most needed on the nation's farms. The program was administered by the state extension services; WLA supervisors and county agents spearheaded recruitment.

Although the experience of women in the WLA differed from state to state and from crop to crop, the government provided a number of uniform benefits, including a living wage (which ranged from 20 cents per hour in the South to 66 cents per hour in the East), transportation, health insurance, and a place to live. WLA women wore standardized uniforms that consisted of blue denim overalls and powder-blue shirts.

Partly because of limited funding and partly because of opposition to women working as agricultural laborers, the program got off to a slow start in 1943. Far western states, such as California, and states in the eastern coastal regions that had extensive truck farming operations quickly accepted female labor and supported the WLA throughout the war. Initially, the Midwest and the South were reluctant to participate in the program. Midwestern farmers, who had highly mechanized farming operations, feared that urban women would not be able to operate expensive farm machinery, might undermine midwestern morality, and would not be strong enough to do heavy labor. In the South, where African American women and lower-class white women had always worked in the fields, farmers did not want middle-class white women to work in the fields because it might undermine the race and class structure of southern society. Farmers and ranchers in the Great Plains and Rocky Mountain states were also hostile to the use of women laborers. In the Midwest and South, and the Great Plains and Rocky Mountain regions as well, farmers generally preferred to

use other sources of farm labor, including female family members, Mexican workers, Japanese internees, prisoners of war, and newly arrived immigrants. As women proved their worth, much of the early opposition to the WLA broke down. By the end of the war, more than three million women had been recruited to serve in the WLA. Many female family members, who were unpaid, also did field work that had been restricted to men before the war. By 1945, women were uniformly praised for their contribution to the war effort; some farmers even stated that they preferred women workers to men.

Stephanie Carpenter argues that the war changed not only male but female attitudes about the ability of women to work in agriculture. Women who participated in the WLA program, according to Carpenter, were positive about their experiences, gained confidence, and felt pride in the patriotic contribution they made to the war effort. Siding with historians who believe that World War II was a watershed in the history of the women's movement, Carpenter concludes that the WLA experience served as a catalyst to change women's role not only in agriculture but in society as a whole in the following decades.

To document her analysis, Carpenter used archive and manuscript materials at the National Archives, the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, the Howe Library at the University of Vermont, the USDA in Washington, the Walter Library at the University of Minnesota, and the Minnesota Historical Society. The bibliography is comprehensive and will be exceedingly helpful to future researchers. Her writing style is clear, her organization is superb, and her interpretations are sound. Although the focus of the book is narrow, it will be of great interest to students of agricultural history, women's history, and the history of World War II.

Leaning into the Wind: A Memoir of Midwest Weather, by Susan Allen Toth. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003. xi, 124 pp. \$22.95 cloth.

Reviewer Thomas K. Dean is special assistant to the president of the University of Iowa. He heads up a program called the Iowa Project on Place Studies.

Susan Allen Toth returns to her middle land roots in this memoir, with a thematic focus on how the vagaries and extremes of midwestern weather parallel and influence her life. In ten short essays, she explores the storms and fair weather of personal relationships, childhood, aging, work, and humanity's relationship with the natural environment.

Toth's talent for honest, direct expression is on full display. Although not every reader may relate to her life as an academic or the

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