

chief operating official, John D. Farrington, brought a new life to the Rock and together with WWII traffic booms, turned things around, for a time. The 1950s saw shiny new diesel streamlined passenger trains called "Rockets" polishing the rails. More importantly for the bottom line were the hundreds of freight diesels and significant right of way improvements of the era. By the late 1950s the Rock Island was a well-run and reasonably prosperous railroad. But dark clouds were on the horizon.

A stillborn merger with the Union Pacific in the mid-1960s along with increasing competition from other railroads and highways led the Rock Island to its final bankruptcy in the mid-1970s. This time there would be no traffic boom to save the Rock. Despite the best efforts of management including a new bright blue and white paint scheme on its locomotives, the Rock Island railroad effectively ceased to exist in January 1980. But while the Rock Island name is gone, many of its rail lines still exist and still see trains. Grant does a good job summarizing this long decline and fall of the Rock Island, but those interested in a more detailed and thorough examination are directed to Gregory L. Schneider's *Rock Island Requiem: The Collapse of a Mighty Fine Line*.

A good selection of maps, photos, and other black and white illustrations add significantly to the book. It is completed by ample endnotes and an index. Grant's *Mighty Fine Road* should appeal to business and railroad historians and those interested in midwestern and Iowa history.

Upon the Altar of Work: Child Labor and the Rise of a New American Sectionalism, by Betsy Wood. *The Working Class in American History*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2020. xi, 256 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$28.00 paperback.

Reviewer Jennifer Robin Terry is a historian with a Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley. Her manuscript, "A Century of Denial: Agrarianism and Child Farm Labor in America," analyzes the role that national myths have played in shaping social mores and labor law.

Betsy Wood's *Upon the Altar of Work: Child Labor and the Rise of a New American Sectionalism* offers a bold interpretation for why sectionalism continued long after the Civil War. Tracing the evolution of ideas surrounding children and their labor, Wood argues that the debates over Progressive Era child labor reform broke down over conflicting North/South sectional ideologies, resulting in a new imaginary Mason-Dixon line within modern capitalist society. *Upon the Altar of Work* draws together several important episodes in the history of child labor reform, includ-

ing the work of Charles Loring Brace's Children's Aid Society; the Reconstruction era apprenticing of black children; the rise of southern textile mills; and the founding of the National Child Labor Committee, among others. In doing so, Wood demonstrates a continuity and coherence in the reform movement, which is often unclear in other monographs.

Presented chronologically, the study begins by examining the influence of northern free labor ideology on the moral-uplift agendas of 1850s child welfare advocates. It then juxtaposes northern children's factory and contract labor with the southern post-emancipation child apprenticing system in order to demonstrate how debates over these practices reinforced definitions of free and unfree labor. Taken together, the first two chapters lay a foundation for the North/South dichotomy that is the basis of the book's argument. Next, in a chapter that echoes Shelley Sallee's *The Whiteness of Child Labor Reform in the New South* (2004), Wood explains the failings of free labor ideology as white southern mill children became the object of northern reformers' zeal in the 1880s and 1890s. Referring to the concerted focus on southern child labor reform as a "national turn" (68), she explains that it was the catalyst for a new sectionalism, pitting northern reformers against southern capitalists—though the place of northern capitalists in all of this is unclear. The last two chapters leave behind free labor ideology as Wood explains that "child labor debates deepened sectionalist divisions along religious and cultural lines" (86). This happened first in the 1910s when northern reformers gained the moral high ground by wielding Social Gospel doctrine, and then in the 1920s when southern manufacturers rallied religious, tradition-minded rural families to defeat the Child Labor Amendment. A brief conclusion explains that the new sectionalism tempered the child labor provision of the 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act.

Though provocative, the assertion that a North/South dichotomy defined the child labor reform battle lines well into the twentieth century is too rigid. The argument is most effective in explaining the rhetorical influence of sectionalist labor ideology on child welfare advocates in the mid- to late nineteenth century, but one wonders at the utility of limiting the discussion to a North/South binary in the years beyond. While intriguing in its application to northern factories and southern mills, the argument becomes unwieldy when considering the western shift in child labor reform in the decades surrounding the 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act. This is most evident in chapter five, where all who opposed the Child Labor Amendment (including Massachusetts manufacturers and unnamed—though one suspects—midwestern farm families) are lumped

into the culturally conservative southern opposition camp. In privileging a North/South binary, Wood ignores midwestern farm families, as well as western agribusiness and migrant child labor. Certainly, conflicting cultural ideologies increasingly marked child labor reform debates in the early twentieth century, but those conflicts could not be contained neatly within sectional boxes. Granted, child labor was a significant issue at the dawn of the modern era, but I am unconvinced that it was the cause célèbre behind a new sectionalism.

The American Steppes: The Unexpected Russian Roots of Great Plains Agriculture, 1870s–1930s, by David Moon. Studies in Environment and History. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020. xl, 431 pp. Figures, maps, tables, notes, index. \$126 hardcover.

Reviewer John Husmann is a historian who lives in Mitchell, South Dakota. His research has focused on environmental history, comparative transnational history, and the history of the Great Plains.

The American Steppes is a well-researched history that reveals the global connections between two similar regions. David Moon digs extensively and deeply to uncover and examine how Russia's agricultural development of the steppes influenced agricultural developments in the Great Plains. Moon's impressively researched transnational history analyzes the impactful migrations, exchanges, and explorations of plants, knowledge, and techniques from the Russian steppes to the Great Plains.

The first chapters of Moon's transnational history provide important "context" (37) for the reader. These chapters address the contours of Euro-American agricultural settlement of the Great Plains and, more briefly, the agricultural settlement of the steppes. They also analyze various factors fettering and fostering transfers from the latter to the former region. Although the two regions had very similar semi-arid grassland environments and agricultural settlement experiences, Moon emphasizes that Russian agricultural settlement of the steppes got an earlier start than similar Euro-American processes on the Great Plains and that the steppes had relatively harsher climatic elements. These historical and environmental elements would in part underwrite the predominant direction of the transfers from the steppe encounters to the subsequent, parallel encounters with the Great Plains half a world away.

Moon diligently tends to the identification and analysis of these transfers, both material and ideational. "Barriers" (54) to these transfers came from global agricultural competition between the regions, low regard for Russia and later the Soviet Union in the U.S., a lack of knowledge