

Erica Ball's essay on convention rites and rituals place collectivity at the center of Black political consciousness.

The third section identifies intersections between conventioners' antislavery activism and their efforts to build Black political power. Examining activists' traversal of hidden and public worlds of activism, Cheryl LaRoche negates Underground Railroad lore that foregrounds white heroes. Essays by Sarah Patterson and others explore the interplay between antislavery and civil rights organizing. The fourth section pursues the expansive activations of this interplay. Tracing activism outside of the North, authors emphasize the movement's endurance after emancipation. Andre E. Johnson shows the unsettled character of calls for reparations and Black emigration after the war. Daina Ramey Berry and Jermaine Thibodeaux's essay on the 1883 Austin convention frames patriarchy as a continuous constraint on the terms by which delegates laid claim to rights. Underscoring the pertinence of the convention movement's demands and practices, the final section invites us to contemplate its resonances.

The problems of omission and erasure addressed in this volume are akin to those in the literature on antislavery politics in the Midwest. Paired with the CCP's digital exhibits, records, and pedagogical tools, this volume might guide midwestern scholars through a similar process of recovery. Engaging P. Gabrielle Foreman's concept of "Black parallel politics" (29), scholars might recompose the genesis, arc, and scope of abolitionist and civil rights organizing in the Midwest. Scholars might begin by reading Cheryl LaRoche's strategies for recovering the roles of Black abolitionists in the Underground Railroad as a roadmap for reconsidering the people and institutions that formed Iowa's abolitionist movement.

Birthing the West: Mothers and Midwives in the Rockies and Plains, by Jennifer J. Hill. Lincoln: Bison Books, University of Nebraska Press, 2022. 320 pp. Photographs, illustrations, map, index. \$24.95 paperback.

Reviewer Megan Birk is Professor of History at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. She is the author of *The Fundamental Institution: Poverty, Social Welfare, and Agriculture in American Poor Farms* (2022) and *Fostering on the Farm: Child Placement in the Rural Midwest* (2015).

In this examination of rural women, childbirth, and the intimate networks that provided women with assistance and expertise, Jennifer J. Hill offers content relevant to rural life. With case studies of specific mothers and midwives and the records from the Children's Bureau,

which studied the northern plains and eastern Rockies and their birthing practices, Hill paints a clear picture of what pregnancy and birth were like for white women in the region. Although there is regional specificity here, isolation, physically demanding work, and a reliance on neighbors are themes that speak to a larger female experience across place and time.

Before the medical industry denigrated midwifery and hospitals removed women from their homes for births, settlers and homesteaders relied on their friends and neighbors to support them not only for the delivery, but also for the post-partum care that is so dearly absent for many women today. Hill found abundant examples of the substantial investment of time that was made when women aided one another for days and weeks at a time. They spent considerable energy and time away from their own homes to do so. They brought with them the knowledge gained from mentorship, the wisdom of previous generations, and their own birthing experiences. Despite the isolation of western farms, Hill asserts that few women gave birth completely alone.

In addition to the part-time midwives who came from neighboring farms and ranches, there were professional midwives and those who partnered with local doctors in the region. Some women even became small entrepreneurs, opening their own maternity homes in towns that allowed women rest and recuperation in a midwife-run facility. Although doctors and the American Medical Association worked to paint midwifery as a danger to pregnant women, Hill, like other scholars of the subject, found no evidence to support those assertions. These unfortunate efforts paved the way for less supportive, dehumanizing, and invasive procedures that resulted in damage and infection during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and hastened the loss of traditional knowledge and practices. As opposed to the generally sanitary practices of midwives, poverty, stress, and limited access to labor and delivery assistance were far more dangerous variables.

The narrative moves between historical content and a first-person account of the research experiences of the author. It makes for an interesting blend. Although firmly situated in the long Progressive Era and in conversation with Children's Bureau records, the work of Julia Lathrop, and the rise of professionalization, expertise, and record keeping, there is not an explicit connection made between the larger efforts of the Progressives and the effects on rural women. The work makes it clear why Children's Bureau-sponsored legislation such as the Sheppard-Towner Act was profoundly important in states like Montana, which briefly led the nation in maternal mortalities. Readers who are familiar

with Brianna Theobald's *Reproduction on the Reservation* will make connections between this work and the practices of Indigenous women, but additional comparisons would have enriched this text. The practices detailed are not only specific to this place and time but also to many rural women. There was an exciting but underdeveloped section about the collusion of anti-midwife and anti-immigrant sentiments in the Mountain West that leaves space for other scholars to investigate.

The book includes a lovely photo collection of children delivered by midwife Mary Kassmeier, which speaks to the close ties that bound child-bearing women to the circle of support that helped them through a dangerous and vulnerable time. This work contains examples that many will find poignant and provides a fine introduction to the topic of rural childbirth and networks of female cooperation.

Grasslands Grown: Creating Place on the U.S. Northern Plains and Canadian Prairies, by Molly P. Rozum. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2021. 500 pp. Notes, photographs, illustrations, maps, index. \$75.00 hardcover.

Reviewer Julie Courtwright is Associate Professor of History at Iowa State University. Her research focuses on the Great Plains of North America. She is the author of *Prairie Fire: A Great Plains History* (2011), which is the first book in her trilogy on fire, wind, and water in the Great Plains.

The grasslands of the northern United States and Canada is a region continually neglected by writers (and practically everyone else). Therefore, Molly P. Rozum's innovative *Grasslands Grown: Creating Place on the U.S. Northern Plains and Canadian Prairies* is a particularly welcome addition. Rozum, who is associate professor and Ronald R. Nelson Chair of Great Plains and South Dakota History at the University of South Dakota, has written a transnational history that also manages to be intimate. This is no insignificant task. Personal stories of grasslands people dominate this book, and Rozum skillfully uses their experiences to consider larger issues such as Indigenous influence, the role of myth in culture, the transition from a grass to grain ecosystem, and both United States and Canadian policies within a shared environment.

The focus of *Grasslands Grown*, however, is people. Specifically, Rozum studies the first generation born after American and Canadian colonization. This generation grew up in the grassland—they were “grasslands grown”—and, influenced by their exploration, play, and work within the prairie/plain environment, “root[ed] their own stories in the land” (7). In other words, they made the northern grasslands their