

points in Professor Savage's study. He gives an account of the mining town of Buxton, Iowa, in which blacks constituted half of the town's population and assumed community leadership roles during Buxton's brief period of prosperity. Another prominent section of Savage's account deals with the political career of Alexander Clark, a black citizen of Muscatine who became widely known as the "Orator of the West" and was appointed consul general to Liberia by President Harrison in 1890. *Blacks in the West* is valuable primarily for its presentation of facts of this kind, which illustrate Professor Savage's concluding remarks. He reminds us that "the West has given blacks an opportunity to make a better life for themselves" and that "In return, they have given the West of themselves."

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*Katy Northwest, The Story of a Branch Line Railroad*, by Donovan L. Hof-sommer. Boulder, Colorado: Pruitt Publishing Company, 1976. pp. xxiii, 306. Maps, photographs, charts, footnotes, index. \$26.95.

Donovan Hof-sommer's *Katy Northwest* is an outstanding study of a regional railroad that faithfully served its area for over half a century. Two North Texas capitalists, Frank Kell and Joseph A. Kemp founded the line in 1906 as the Wichita Falls and Northwestern Railway to haul grain to their wheat and flour milling business in Wichita Falls. Economic interest and these two men's enterprising vision extended the line northward two hundred miles through western Oklahoma; its adjacent neighbour, the Beaver, Meade, and Englewood, to which the Northwestern was physically and corporately joined, added another one hundred miles of road by reaching Keyes in the Oklahoma Panhandle. The line's three hundred miles of road pulsed with life for over five decades, after which, enormous problems beset it, forcing abandonment of the major portion in 1973.

It is Hof-sommer's thesis that the railway filled a need in this recently settled land. Kemp and Kell never built beyond the frontier; instead, they preferred to construct in territory recently settled but not fully developed. The Wichita Falls and Northwestern completely fits this framework. In 1912 the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railway acquired the line, naming it the Northwestern Division. Just as the line became a part of the larger carrier, the Katy, so did its territory become a part of the national and even international social and economic community. For example, wheat, a major crop of this section and an important component of the railroad's business, found its way to the international wheat market at Houston by way of Northwestern and Katy rails. And there appears to be an especially close relationship between the road's arrival in the Oklahoma Panhandle and the rapid increase of wheat production in that windswept area.

This was no through-run railroad; practically every freight train was a

local; and the passenger trains stopped at every town and even rural spots in between. Closely identified with its region, its trainmen were on personal terms with regular patrons; the local population returned this warm admiration, though owning no stock, the railway was "theirs" as no other transportation system was.

Though a marginal operation in terms of profit, the line for decades was an integral part of its region's life and it was a major contributor to parent Katy's traffic. Again and again the theme appears in the book: that every day it performed the essential, if unspectacular task of simply doing its job: giving dependable, effective, low-cost transportation to its customers and thereby serving the public interest. Never built to heavy standards, the roadbed was primarily of dirt with occasional gravel sifted in; however intensive maintenance had kept it in good shape for frequent, though light service. Oil booms and summer wheat traffic brought seasonal and temporary traffic increases.

Since its profits were marginal, this caused the Katy railroad to choose this division for cost cutting when hard times hit the entire railroad in the 1950s. As the line still was important to its corporate parent as a feeder, the Katy chose not to abandon it but rather to cut maintenance drastically.

The policy of non-maintenance commencing in the 1950s, together with major changes in traffic, spelled eventual doom for the Northwestern. A drouth in the 1950s and the consequent decline in wheat traffic temporarily clouded the results of long term trends: low maintenance and the transportation revolution wrought by better highways and trucks after the Second World War. The line cancelled its passenger trains in 1954 having lost its passenger traffic to the automobile. And also substantial changes took place in its freight pattern. Up to about 1950 this traffic had been diversified, but thereafter it lost all except wheat to trucks and pipelines. In effect the Division became a one product carrier. The transport of wheat requires a well maintained road, which the line no longer was. The end of the drouth in the late 1950s returned heavily laden wheat trains to the now ill maintained road. Ties came loose; weeds and grass grew between the rails. Speed restrictions were reduced from forty miles to fifteen, and even this was too high. Cars and even locomotives fell off the rails at speeds barely above standing still.

Abandonment followed logically. When under the new and farsighted management of John W. Barriger, the Katy Railroad gave a fair review to the Northwestern Division, it found the line was too far gone for rehabilitation. Rebuilding from the ground up was necessary; and long term estimates of income did not justify so tremendous an expense. Abandonment for the major portion 330 miles from Altus to Keyes, took place in 1973. The Katy elected to retain the southern eighty miles of line between Altus and Wichita Falls.

Judicious choice of photographs help to tell the story; pictures taken in the early years show steam powered engines huffing over a well-manicured right-of-way free of vegetation. Pictures of the line in the 1960s show diesel powered freights slowly moving over a weed and grass filled track. The contrast is complete.

An impressive variety of original sources supports this work and verifies the author's conclusions. Professor Hofsommer uses original records of the Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad and of the Interstate Commerce Commission as well as personal correspondence and newspaper accounts. His skillful use of interviews with employees and officials gives a vivid quality to the study. The work is of major importance as regional history and an important contribution to the study of railroads in the twentieth century.

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*First Majority—Last Minority: The Transforming of Rural Life in America*, by John L. Shover. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1976. pp. xix, 338. Index, illustrations, notes. \$12.50.

In this contribution to the Minorities in America Series, the late John L. Shover examines the position of a dwindling minority in the United States—farmers, who today constitute only about 4.5 percent of the nation's population. The "traditional yeoman farmer," he notes, has been absorbed into a "vertically and horizontally integrated mass production industry" by a process which Shover labels "The Great Disjuncture" (p. xiv). The book's purpose is to explain this transformation, focusing on the years since 1945.

After tracing shifts in population from rural to urban areas and describing the agricultural regions of the country, Shover presents rural change in microcosm through several case studies. In Scioto Township, Delaware County, Ohio, he detects the loss of a rural sense of community and the development of a "blue-collar suburb;" in Bedford County, Pennsylvania, he discovers the transition from a farmers' enclave to a motorists' oasis. Two sketches of individual farms, based on Henry C. Taylor's *Tarpleywick: A Century of Iowa Farming* and Curtis K. Stadtfeld's *From the Land and Back*, illustrate the effects of technological innovation on daily life.

The scope of the book broadens in succeeding chapters, first to a survey of methods of operation in contemporary agricultural units that are more like factories than farms. Such technical sophistication facilitated the growth of agribusiness—vertically integrated production and marketing of food. Shover's wry humor only thinly covers his deep alarm at the power, not always latent, which great conglomerates hold over the nation's supply of food. Then, in an interpretive review of governmental programs for farmers, Shover observes that agriculture is the only sector of the economy that may be said to have a "policy," but that the policy has been shaped in haphazard fashion by competing interest groups.

Finally, in a discussion of the "World Food Crisis," Shover announces that American goals must no longer be to restrict agricultural output, but rather to assist the rest of the world in feeding expanding populations, not

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