

Book Notices

All We Had Was Each Other: An Oral History of the Black Community of Madison, Indiana, by Don Wallis. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998. xx, 136 pp. \$24.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY DARREL E. BIGHAM, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN INDIANA

Madison, Indiana, is a model town for historic preservationists. Like most places, though, it had a small black neighborhood that after desegregation and urban renewal was virtually forgotten. Don Wallis interviewed approximately 25 natives to recall that heritage. Unfortunately he offers neither historical context nor details on selection or dates and places of interviews. Subjects are generally sixty or older and successful children of the local black elite. Many have left Madison.

Nostalgia pervades this little volume. Declared one native, now an affluent Iowan, "I have great memories, I remember *family*. I remember *community*. . . . everybody cared so much for each other. We lived together in our little world" (136). How to recreate similar community today is a question that many raise but cannot answer.

This is a small window on the separate worlds that dominated Madison and probably most midwestern towns. To many, the past persists. "Growing up here was a healthy experience for me. . . . I'm glad I got out. . . . We have grown. But Madison is still the same as it was when we left" (120). Another declared, "Our neighborhood is in the Madison Historic District and everything . . . is supposed to be preserved, but nobody said anything about preserving *our* homes. They said, tear them down" (80). The Iowan noted, though, that "Iowa City reminds me a lot of Madison. . . . [My] children go through the same kinds of things here that I went through growing up. . . . There is that same racial overtone, always there" (136).

The Girls Are Coming, by Peggie Carlson. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1999. 203 pp. \$24.95 cloth, \$15.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY DEBORAH FINK, AMES

The Girls Are Coming is Peggie Carlson's first-person narrative of her entry into the blue-collar workforce of the 1970s. Attracted to the high

wages of the Minnegasco Company of Minneapolis, she was one of the first women to broach this predominantly white male enclave. As a twenty-two-year-old black college student, she negotiated race, class, and gender divisions painfully but successfully, becoming the first female pipefitter in Minnesota. Hooked onto the end of the employment story is a happy love story in which she met and married a fellow university student cum Minnegasco janitor. The circle closed as both returned to their university lives and middle-class careers enriched by their continuing connections to the changing blue-collar world.

We want this to be a period piece that our daughters and sons read to know the bad old days when men harassed and intimidated women and when incredible racial assumptions got made. Yet besides being a 1970s story, it may also, unfortunately, serve as guide and support for contemporary innocents facing similar dilemmas. Either way, it is a warm and engaging story of female bonding, kindness, and decency overcoming cruelty and stupidity, with family solidarity and love coalescing at the end. Give this book to anyone high school age or older. It should work for women or men, black or other, pipefitter or senator.

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