

While offering a fresh perspective, Johnston's monograph suffers from some organizational, stylistic, and interpretive problems that degrade its quality. He intertwines the Portland material with preachy and pedantic chapters on historiography that disrupt the narrative. In spite of Johnston's professed respect for the "intelligence" of "the sages who have come before us" (xiii), his treatment of other scholars—Marxists and feminists in particular—often degenerates into vitriolic attacks on their myopia and features such unhelpful insights as his accusation that modern intellectuals have demonized the American middle class, apparently because of "guilt over their privileged backgrounds, or because of their lack of democratic faith" (5). Finally, Johnston offers some questionable interpretations. For instance, in an attempt to describe many of the middling Portland business owners as "anti-capitalist," he offers a circumscribed and unpersuasive definition of capitalism, "whose core is extensive wage labor employed by large enterprises seeking high profit by exercising their quasi-monopolistic privileges in the market" (83), thereby excluding small proprietorships. He performs similar contortions to rationalize middling support for a compulsory education bill supported by the Portland Ku Klux Klan (221–47) and an antidemocratic statement made by Harry Lane (44–45).

In spite of these flaws, Johnston's book is a useful revision of Progressive Era historiography; it should stimulate lively debate, new historical questions, and new lines of inquiry.

*The Pen Is Mightier: The Muckraking Life of Charles Edward Russell*, by Robert Miraldi. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. xiii, 328 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$32.50 cloth.

Reviewer Bill Silag is a consultant in the Iowa Department of Education's Bureau of Community Colleges and Career and Technical Education. Several careers ago, even before he earned his Ph.D. in history and wrote a number of articles about the settlement of northwest Iowa, he wrote a master's thesis about Charles Edward Russell.

Iowa-born Charles Edward Russell was one of about a dozen prominent American journalists whose critiques of corporate capitalism in the early years of the twentieth century helped produce a spate of regulatory legislation that remains fundamental to the conduct of commerce in the United States to this day. Derisively named "the muckrakers" by Theodore Roosevelt, Russell and his fellow writers devoted themselves to exposing the grim human realities—the poverty, injustice, and political chicanery—accompanying the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the new century's emerging business elite.

Russell's father was Edward Russell, an abolitionist who edited the *Davenport Gazette* in the 1850s. The elder Russell instilled in his son a belief in the idea of the press as guardian of civic virtue, committed to the elimination of social evil through an aroused community conscience. In *The Pen Is Mightier*, biographer Robert Miraldi shows how readily this commitment transferred from the abolitionist press of frontier Iowa to the pages of Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World* and William Randolph Hearst's *New York Journal*, where the younger Russell rose to fame as an editor in the 1890s.

At the *World* and the *Journal* in the 1890s, Russell learned to put the cause of social justice in the service of commerce, adhering to his employers' basic marketing strategy of building readership through relentless editorial campaigns against political corruption and other threats to community welfare. In the early 1900s, he and his fellow muckrakers used the same strategies to advance their public policy goals. Skeptics like Theodore Roosevelt may have wondered whether the muckrakers' motivations were any less commercial than Pulitzer's or Hearst's had been, but no matter, says Russell's biographer. The muckrakers raised important issues, aroused the public conscience, and prompted the enactment of enough legislation protective of the public interest for the muckrakers to claim victory for their cause.

In Progressivism's later years, as the United States approached entry into World War I, Russell complained that muckraking really did "nothing against the fundamental system" (132), despite its reputation as an instrument of reform. At that point in his career, he was himself an occasional candidate for public office on the Socialist ticket. But Russell was never concrete about how he might change "the fundamental system." Other than expressions of support for public ownership of utilities—hardly a controversial proposal in the United States after 1900—Russell had nothing to say about what might follow a Socialist victory. Miraldi notes that Russell apparently had no plan for restructuring the economy or the government and that he rarely even mentioned the working class in his writing. Like Progressives in general, even a "radical" muckraker like Russell was not opposed to capitalism as such. His enemy was the concentration of wealth and power he saw striking at the very heart of "the American idea—the idea of equal opportunity" (111), as that idea was understood by the nation's middle class in the three or four decades following the Civil War.

Historians of the Progressive Era may wish that there were more analysis of the period—that is, of the economic and political environment within which Russell and the muckrakers did their work—but as a biographer Miraldi is to be commended for his vivid portraits of

Russell's contemporaries and splendid characterizations of such cultural icons as Joseph Pulitzer, William Randolph Hearst, and W. E. B. DuBois. Unfortunately, the quality of the author's presentation is marred throughout the book by typographical errors, stylistic inconsistencies, and factual inaccuracies. For example, the year of Russell's death—given by the Library of Congress as 1941—is stated on page ix of Miraldi's book as 1940 and on page 268 as 1941; an endnote on page 314 even suggests that Russell died in 1901. Proofreading oversights such as these diminish reader confidence in an otherwise persuasive presentation of Charles Edward Russell's life and times.

*The Romance of Small-Town Chautauquas*, by James R. Schultz. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002. 185 pp. Illustrations, appendixes, bibliography, glossary, index. \$29.95 cloth.

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Chautauqua was a major source of education, cultural enlightenment, and entertainment that flourished in rural America from 1904 through 1932. James R. Schultz grew up hearing stories of chautauqua from his father, who served as a chautauqua superintendent. Schultz used his father's notes and materials as a basis for his research for *The Romance of Small-Town Chautauquas*, which gives an overview of that phenomenon.

In 1874, a group of teachers and ministers established the Chautauqua Institute near Lake Chautauqua, New York. A cross between a camp meeting and a lecture series, it proved so successful that several towns soon established their own gatherings patterned after the New York organization. One of the earliest independent chautauquas was held in Clear Lake, Iowa, in 1876.

In 1904, Keith Vawter of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, developed an efficient and economical circuit system that brought traveling chautauquas to thousands of communities throughout the country. Vawter assumed management of the Redpath Lecture Bureau to form the Redpath-Vawter Chautauqua organization. "Signs outside Cedar Rapids, Iowa where Vawter grew up, proclaimed the town as the 'home of Keith Vawter, founder of the circuit chautauqua'" (56).

A few communities, such as Red Oak and Fairfield, Iowa, built permanent chautauqua pavilions, but most towns held the presentations in a large tent. The tent outfit and a manager arrived by train.

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