

of it with a theory—that of the social bandit from the peasantry who wages class warfare against his oppressors.

Splendidly researched and elegantly written, *Jesse James: Last Rebel of the Civil War* blasts the myths like dynamite on an old mail car. Basically, James was a thug—a talented thug, but a thug nonetheless. Given license to act out his thuggish tendencies during the Civil War, he, along with other ex-Confederate rampagers, continued fighting the Yankees, or at least the ex-Yankees of the plains. He and his friends did it because they could and because they liked doing it. They did it because they hated Yankees or Yankee sympathizers. They did not do it because they had populist political aspirations. It was not to Robin Hood that James could trace his influence, Stiles shows convincingly, but to the aptly named Bloody Bill Anderson, the notorious and brutal Confederate guerilla fighter with whom James rode during the war.

Despite the best efforts of writers such as Stiles, we can expect new bandit heroes. As long as there is fascination for the clever or bold or outrageous criminal, there will be outlets for feeding the myths.

*Rails across the Mississippi: A History of the St. Louis Bridge*, by Robert W. Jackson. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001. ix, 266 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95 cloth.

Reviewer Kevin Byrne is professor of history at Gustavus Adolphus College. His research and writing have focused on the history of technology, railroads, and the American military.

Robert Jackson's detailed, well-researched volume explores the intricate history of the planning, financing, and construction of St. Louis's Eads Bridge, examining local, national, and international contexts. Designer and self-styled genius James Eads, an entrepreneur without prior engineering experience, and industrialist Andrew Carnegie emerge from a welter of names as the most prominent players in the drama. Challenging conventional techniques, Eads envisioned a unique arched, two-level bridge that would be a monument to his life's achievements, much to the chagrin of Carnegie, who secured British financing and headed the company building the superstructure. Carnegie and associates preferred efficiency and profit and, true to Gilded Age principles, kept their attention keenly focused on accumulating personal wealth. Meanwhile, Eads's insistence on innovative designs and preference for steel led to expensive delays, several workers' deaths, and significant cost overruns, as did complications over the related building of a tunnel and union depot in St. Louis. Seven years after beginning construction in 1867—three years overdue and

\$6 million over budget—the viaduct opened to a spectacular display. But the toll bridge, which still stands, was a financial failure despite its storied aesthetic appeal.

Written in workmanlike prose, Jackson's history is a useful analog to endeavors by transcontinental-minded railroad leaders and local boosters to bridge the Mississippi River into Iowa. Indeed, efforts by Chicago interests to do so energized civic leaders further south. Those with a taste for the intricacies of nineteenth-century business history will find this book to be an intriguing read.

*Sex Radicals and the Quest for Women's Equality*, by Joanne E. Passet. Women in American History Series. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003. ix, 250 pp. Illustrations, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95 cloth, \$25.00 paper.

Reviewer Alison M. Parker is associate professor of history at the State University of New York, Brockport. She is the author of *Purifying America: Women, Cultural Reform, and Pro-Censorship Activism, 1873-1933* (1997).

Joanne Passet's *Sex Radicals and the Quest for Women's Equality* is an excellent new volume in the Women in American History series published by the University of Illinois Press. It highlights the contributions of nineteenth-century sex radicals who, as Passet puts it, insisted on "a woman's right to control her body and to freely discuss such critical issues as contraception, marital sexual abuse . . . and sex education" (1).

Passet debunks the stereotype of "free love" ideas as an East Coast and urban phenomenon. Painstaking research allowed Passet to create a new profile of women readers and contributors to the sex radical periodicals from 1853 to 1910 as having rural and midwestern (and western) backgrounds. Isolated rural farm women in states such as Iowa found that sex radical periodicals linked them to a larger reform movement and addressed their central concerns regarding their high number of pregnancies, which risked their health and lives. Unlike most suffragists, Woman's Christian Temperance Union members, and social purity reformers who insisted that sex be tied only and directly to reproduction, sex radicals embraced sex and sexuality as an embodiment of true love between a man and a woman (even if unmarried). They also advocated versions of John Humphrey Noyes's male continence technique that allowed for intercourse without ejaculation, thereby protecting women from unwanted pregnancies.

Detailing the life and work of sex radical Mary Grove Nichols, Passet highlights the first phase of the sex radical movement from 1853 to 1870. The example of Nichols neatly illustrates how people

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