

One surprisingly neglected area, especially for a monograph in a series on immigration, is the role of ethnicity. Although Sutton does not address this issue, it appears from his evidence that the Icarians' strong allegiance to French culture and language may have been as important as communist ideology in keeping the sect intact amid New World opportunities and distractions. Conversely, the Icarians' ethnocentrism and their requirement that applicants be fluent in French prevented them from attracting or admitting Americans interested in their communities. Too little is said in *Les Icariens* about the group's interactions with Americans and their culture.

These, however, are minor criticisms of a book that is both a good story and a solid scholarly work. Although *Les Icariens* is not the last word on the Icarian movement, together with Christopher Johnson's study it provides the firm foundation upon which future scholarship on Cabet and his colonies will be built.

Making the Corn Belt: A Geographical History of Middle-Western Agriculture, by John C. Hudson. *Midwestern History and Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994. ix, 254 pp. Illustrations, maps, charts, notes, index. \$35.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY MARY ESCHELBACH GREGSON, KNOX COLLEGE

John Hudson weaves social, demographic, economic, and agricultural history together with geological and anthropological evidence to produce his masterful *Making the Corn Belt*. Hudson gives us a sense of the Corn Belt landscape from European settlement through the present.

Hudson defines the Corn Belt as counties in which aggregate corn output exceeds 7.5 bushels per improved acre; additionally, the county's farmers must raise at least 18.5 bushels of corn for each head of livestock. From "five islands" of productive farmland in Tennessee, Kentucky, and Ohio in 1840, the Corn Belt spread west along waterways into Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri during the next decade, then north to Iowa and the eastern fringe of Nebraska and Kansas by 1880.

Geologic and climatic change shaped the contours of the Corn Belt, but the land white settlers found was not primeval. Native American hunting and ground-clearing techniques included regular firing of the land; woody plants were held in check and grasses were favored. Hudson's story suggests that historians should revise their estimates of the cost of land clearing. White settlers who arrived shortly after the Native Americans were pushed west tilled land that had only begun to be retaken from the grass by the shrubs and trees. For example, the Barrens of southern Kentucky were "the first extensive tract of grassland settled by the white population of North America"

and "the product of deliberate burning." Furthermore, observers noted that "since settlement came and burning ceased, the forest had nearly regained its former ground" (27-28). The point is reinforced in chapter 3: "The lands perceived [by white settlers] to be the best were those that had already been modified by human activity" (43). Hudson's story of the Corn Belt begins here, with documentation that the phenomenally quick growth of Corn Belt output depended critically on the usurpation of investments made by the previous residents of the land.

Chapters 4 through 6 tell the story of the corn itself, the breeds of hogs, and the technology of producing meat. Varieties of corn were crossed to emphasize ease of feeding to cattle and especially to hogs, which were in turn bred to convert corn into lard and protein as efficiently as possible. Hudson concludes that the cattle-feeding system was indeed efficient, reminiscent of mass production: "A ten-acre cornfield was the basic unit, supporting one hundred head of cattle in the late fall fattening season. . . . For each field, there were two or three of like size adjoining it. . . . Each lot of one hundred head was fed together and then driven to market together" (71).

In chapter 7, Hudson adds to our understanding of westward migration by mapping the birthplaces of settlers of early Sangamon County, Illinois, and east-central Indiana from information in county histories (94, 100). He shows that the feedlot system characteristic of the mid-nineteenth-century Corn Belt originated in areas settled by so-called Upland Southerners. Yankees came later and brought their capital to a land with an established system of farming.

The story of the Corn Belt's transition from a river-based economy to a rail-based one is started at the end of chapter 7, but is interrupted—in the book as it was in history—by the issue of slavery and the destruction of the Civil War. After discussion of sectional politics in the Corn Belt, the thread of shared economic growth and development is taken up again in chapter 9. The establishment of the Chicago Board of Trade, the Union Stockyards, and cheap overland routes to market led to the emergence of cash corn farming and to the concentration of meatpacking in Chicago.

Hybridization of corn and the introduction of soybeans, combined with new commercial uses for both crops, radically changed the system of agriculture in the Middle West during the mid-twentieth century. Concurrently, the interstate system and cheap fuel led farmers to favor trucks over rail cars to haul stock. Cattle-raising moved west. Irrigation technology made it possible to grow feed-corn nearer the cattle.

The final chapter stresses that the value of the land, which the author treats as a function of its fertility and human improvements, is the characteristic that supports intensive Corn Belt agriculture.

Tenancy, cash-grain farming, hybridization, and mechanization have helped farmers pay the single largest cost of production—interest on land (191). Today, high yields are maintained on highly valued land by the application of agricultural chemicals. Is it sustainable? Probably not.

In addition to his wide-ranging description of the landscape of the Middle West, Hudson contributes understanding of the human hands that shaped the landscape. Native Americans, Upland Southerners, Yankee merchants, tenants, railroaders, and corporate merger specialists have all had an impact upon the land. The Middle West has been a laboratory of experimentation and innovation; it was not so much a gift from nature as an environment pried from the hands of an earlier culture. Whatever enterprise is taken up on the land in the twenty-first century will be taken up on land shaped by our use.

Tennessee Farming, Tennessee Farmers: Antebellum Agriculture in the Upper South, by Donald L. Winters. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994. xiv, 240 pp. Maps, tables, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY DAVID E. SCHOB, TEXAS A & M UNIVERSITY

Donald L. Winters, a familiar name to students of Iowa's agricultural heritage, argues that agriculture served as the driving force for Tennessee's settlement and development until the Civil War. The upland South served as a geographical zone of transition between southern patterns of tobacco and cotton production and northern grain and livestock raising. An examination of Tennessee's agricultural production helps to explain why one-third of the state's rural-based population opposed secession and the Confederacy.

Winters is a keen observer of how geography, marketing, and crops influence regional agricultural patterns, especially in terms of agricultural self-sufficiency. Tennessee farmers moved toward economic security through ownership of land and avoidance of debt. Although grain, corn, and pork were important early commodities in East Tennessee, the state's central region witnessed its first commercial cotton cash crop in the 1780s. Over the decades, cotton expanded westward, accelerated by Indian removal. Winters underlines the growing importance of cotton to the state's economy by discussing the enactment of a state inspection labeling act. Tennesseans cleared away another impediment when they declared their willingness to license the cotton gin, remit royalties to Eli Whitney, and avoid legal quagmires.

Tobacco, as the second major staple crop, also was regulated with state inspection standards. Winters conducts a masterful analysis of the commodity marketing of tobacco and cotton. The commercialization of

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