

husband, over sixteen years of great hardship and privation, built a prosperous farm many times the size of the original claim. In 1936 she wrote her life story in Yiddish on a five-by-seven-inch "Clover Leaf Linen" writing tablet. That sixty-seven-page manuscript, titled very simply "My Story," translated by her son and a friend, provides the bulk of *Rachel Calof's Story*.

Written in spare, clear, unembellished prose, her story is, nonetheless, truly riveting. I could not put it down unfinished. Rachel Calof was an acute and objective observer. She wrote without exhibiting any sentimentality, and certainly without a shred of self-pity. From her narrative emerges a picture of an articulate and sensitive woman enduring the enormous hardships of frontier life, a life inordinately complicated by the mere fact of being Jewish. Editor J. Sanford Rikoon has provided excellent and necessary explanatory footnotes to help clarify Jewish terms and customs as well as a number of pertinent and well-chosen black-and-white photographs which add much to the text (although I wish that he had not misidentified a buckboard as a sulky in one of them).

Rachel Calof's narrative is followed by an epilogue written by her son and an essay by Rikoon titled "Jewish Farm Settlements in America's Heartland." The volume concludes with an afterword by Elizabeth Jameson. Although Rikoon's chapter does not do justice to the scope and extent of Jewish agricultural settlement on the Great Plains, it is very helpful in putting Rachel Calof's experience in perspective. Jameson's gratuitous and excessively footnoted afterword, titled "Rachel Bella Calof's Life as Collective History," is less so.

The book is a quietly compelling monument to the triumph of the human spirit. It is also primary source material for the serious historian, especially for those who study pioneer agriculture in mid-America and the role that American Jews played therein. They were truly among the "Giants in the Earth."

*Settling the Canadian-American West, 1890-1915*, by John W. Bennett and Seena B. Kohl. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995. xii, 289 pp. Illustrations, maps, charts, notes, bibliography, index. \$49.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY MEL PREWITT, SCOTT COMMUNITY COLLEGE

During the quarter-century following Frederick Jackson Turner's famous 1893 announcement that the frontier was closed, hundreds of thousands of men and women settled the last great agricultural region to be occupied in North America. They arrived from the farms and small towns of Ontario and the midwestern United States, with many more coming

from England and continental Europe. Facing similar challenges and hardships while striving for common goals, these people with widely diverse backgrounds formed the prairie communities of Montana and southern Alberta and Saskatchewan. The Populism of the American Great Plains and Midwest, the demands for active government by the native Canadians, and the social experiences of the English with an established history of labor activism and cooperativism failed to clash on the open expanses of the West. Instead, variations of experience and cultural heritage meshed, coloring the distinctiveness of the American-Canadian frontier.

Generally respecting the chronological limits of 1890 and 1915, this book is similarly limited geographically by certain boundaries. The communities along and near the mainline track of the Canadian Pacific Railroad mark the northern limit of the study, while those communities associated with the Great Northern Railroad mark the southern boundary. Spanning about four hundred miles from east to west, this region includes southeastern Alberta, southwestern Saskatchewan, and a bit more constricted area in Montana. Railroads were central to the settlement of this area, but today's traveler would describe the same region as being between Trans-Canada Highway 1 and U.S. Highway 2.

Descriptions of this semiarid region inevitably center on climate and physical geography. Wallace Stegner, whose family left the Midwest after his birth in Lake Mills, Iowa, has described his boyhood home on the Canadian prairie in *Wolf Willow* (1955). W. O. Mitchell similarly describes growing up on the Saskatchewan prairie a few years later. Very recently, novelist Sharon Butala also tells of life in this unforgiving land of stark beauty and isolation. All of these writers have devoted their literary efforts to bringing the land, the wind, the temperature extremes to the reader. The sources for John Bennett and Seena Kohl's study were also the people who have lived there. With less literary skill than the novelists, the participants also concentrate on how they individually and collectively faced a harsh environment.

This offering is the culmination of thirty years of individual and joint research on the subject. For this "anthropological history," the authors have used these personal reminiscences and local history books to examine those events and experiences that participants in this adventure considered important. The use of such sources provides an intimate view of the participants as they see themselves, at least those parts of themselves that are not intentionally kept from view. The authors recognize the risks of using this type of material, yet these personal records indicate individual values better than any other available resource.

Both sides of the international boundary are presented in fairly equal portions. Although this line, marked by little iron monuments at one-mile intervals, seemed to have little significance to the settlers at the time, the differences gained importance during the decades that followed. Complaints against the railroads, the banks, the elevators, and government monetary policies were quite consistent, but the cultural experiences of settlers on the two sides of the "line" differed somewhat. To Montana, besides the native-born Americans, came many northern Europeans, many of whom had previous frontier experience in the Midwest. In Canada, the new arrivals were from England and eastern Canada, as well as all parts of the United States and Europe. The frontier experience north of the boundary was therefore tempered by the expectations of Canadians and English.

*Settling the Canadian West* is a complementary addition to the existing scholarship on this regional settlement process. While earlier efforts concentrated on the governmental and political activities that played a large part in this exodus, more recent scholarship tends to study the lives of the people involved and the parts played by men and women in community building. Other historians have studied other areas of the northern Great Plains that were settled at the same time. The bibliography will prove to be valuable to any reader who desires to learn more about the process of community building in the West and the development of this particular region. Bennett and Kohl's presentation and evaluation of what real folks have recorded about their own experiences and those of their ancestors is a very readable volume for both the specialist and the casual student of western lore.

*The Limits of Agrarian Radicalism: Western Populism and American Politics*, by Peter H. Argersinger. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995. x, 302 pp. Notes, index. \$29.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY STANLEY PARSONS, UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-KANSAS CITY

Peter Argersinger's *The Limits of Agrarian Radicalism* is a collection of articles he has written during the past quarter-century about the American Populist movement. Most of the articles deal with an important and seldom explored dimension of Populist history—the limitations placed on political radicalism by American political institutions. In this concern, Argersinger is unique among historians of Populism and political historians in general. The work has implications far beyond Populism: it can be viewed as a study of how the American political

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