

The Jeffersonian Dream: Studies in the History of American Land Policy and Development, by Paul W. Gates, edited by Allan G. and Margaret Beattie Bogue. *Historians of the Frontier and American West Series*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996. xx, 172 pp. Notes, tables, bibliography. \$42.50 cloth.

REVIEWED BY DANIEL FELLER, UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

Paul Gates is the dean of American land-policy historians. From his huge corpus of writings, editors Allan and Margaret Bogue have assembled this sampler of seven Gates articles and two book excerpts to exhibit the breadth of his interests and influence. The selections span more than forty years from the 1940s to the 1980s and cover subjects from the Homestead Act to the Sagebrush Rebellion, from farm tenancy on the Iowa frontier to (in an essay coauthored by Lillian F. Gates) a comparison of mineral resource issues in twentieth-century Canadian and American federal-state relations. A biographical sketch by the Bagues and a brief memoir by Gates himself introduce the collection.

This volume is aptly titled. It may seem strange that land policy, seemingly the driest of subjects, should inspire moral passion. Yet historians from Frederick Jackson Turner to the latest "new western" revisionists have traced their judgments of current society and its ills to roots in public land disposal and management. Gates was no exception. A commitment to democracy and social justice, springing from his own farm background and intellectual groundings in New Deal liberalism, breathed through everything he wrote. To Gates, the great object of land policy should have been to foster family farms. The prevalence of large holdings, corporate and absentee ownership, and tenancy from the prairie states to California signified the policy's failure and America's shame. Though Gates acknowledged that small holders often deviated from the Jeffersonian archetype — that they too could be greedy, contemptuous of the law, and disrespectful of the land — still his sympathies were always with the little guy, the actual settler, against the moneyed speculator, landlord, or large corporation. His lodestar was the "so-called agrarian myth that the family farm was the basis of American democracy" (137). To Gates, writing as late as 1985, that was no myth.

A recent shift in society's moral compass has cast Gates's assumptions in a new and more critical light. As the Great Depression recedes beyond living memory and historians attend more to issues of racial, environmental, and gender equity, Paul Gates's Jeffersonian yeoman — nearly always an Anglo white male — appears in new garb, no longer a struggling victim of oppression but a rapacious creature of

privilege. Gates himself evolved with the times. His 1953 essay, "From Individualism to Collectivism in American Land Policy," included here, marked his growing concern for the environment and ended with a plea for a "more socially minded" use of resources (118). His final essays in the 1980s blasted the "vandalism" (142) wrought by "greedy capitalists" (122) in the West and their Republican allies in Washington.

Gates was no postmodernist, and the shifting applications of his liberal principles did not cause him to doubt their soundness. His unbroken faith in the Jeffersonian dream gives some of his work today a dated look. Yet it stands in this book as a model for later practitioners of scholarship that is propelled by deep conviction, yet still meticulous in research and scrupulous in presentation.

The Pursuit of Local History: Readings on Theory and Practice, edited by Carol Kammen. Matewan, NJ: Alta Mira Press, 1996. 240 pp. Notes, suggested readings, index. \$24.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY ROBERT P. SUTTON, WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Carol Kammen, senior lecturer in local history at Cornell University and a frequent contributor to the American Association for State and Local History's *History News*, has published several books on the writing of local history. Her latest effort brings together essays on the topic in a fine anthology. The authors cover a broad range of subjects: common threads of local and regional history, the role of amateur historians and nonacademics, the purposes of local history, and conceptual approaches to community history, to list a few. The book also confronts serious controversies, such as deficiencies in—and the value of—local history, how not to write it, and how to write dull history. Kammen's husband, historian Michael Kammen, has drafted an excellent summary of opportunities and challenges in the field. Other contributors represent a variety of backgrounds, including established academics like Professor Kammen, historical editors, librarians, and, of course, local historians. Even though most of the authors are from the East, what they have to say about local history in, say, New York, Ohio, or Kansas City is as relevant to Iowa as are the points made in "Nearby History: Connecting Particulars and Universals," by Myron A. Marty, dean of Arts and Sciences at Drake University.

The problems in this useful volume are minor. I question whether the section on nineteenth-century views of local history (Salma Hale's 1828 address to the New Hampshire Historical Society, an 1815 address by James Davis Butler Jr. to the Vermont Historical and Anti-

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