

The book feels more grounded, though, when Yablon considers his material through the frame of *posteritism*, a term coined by Colorado Springs vessel-creator Louis Ehrich to suggest (in Yablon's words) "a sense of duty to posterity." Posteritism neatly conveys a recognition of one's place in a flow of time from past to present to future. All of Yablon's quirky characters share that awareness acutely and wrestle with its implications in ways ambitious and, often, painful.

These all-so-human dynamics give *Remembrance of Things Present* its energy and relevance today. Such opportunities for contemporary connection make puzzling Yablon's dismissal of the 1939 World's Fair capsule as "corporate and technocratic appropriation" (236). He convincingly shows that public relations and product placement shaped that capsule's contents, but, by denigrating such projects as inauthentic, Yablon implies that the earlier efforts he chronicles were somehow more pure. Saying that time capsules show "diminishing potential" after 1940, he ends his story just at the moment when the capsules captured popular imagination (20). The hundreds and thousands of "underground history" efforts deposited since 1939 get treated as spin-offs of the "corporate variant," addressed just in an epilogue (297).

The fine-grained determination with which Yablon digs into the earlier time vessels and his relative lack of interest in later time capsules may make *Remembrance of Things Present* less compelling to casual readers. But the depth of his research, the fearlessness with which he pursues leads, and the heft of the questions he asks along the way offer historians rare opportunities to dissect history making in motion. "Half-cooked history," Yablon shows, need not mean half-baked and, in fact, provides rich and sustaining insights.

The Civilian Conservation Corps in Wisconsin: Nature's Army at Work, by Jerry Apps. Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2019. xii, 211 pp. Map, illustrations, sidebars, notes, index. \$18.95 paperback.

Reviewer Rebecca Conard is professor of history emeritus at Middle Tennessee State University. She is the author of *Places of Quiet Beauty: Parks, Preserves, and Environmentalism* (1997).

Jerry Apps, who has published more than 35 books on rural life in Wisconsin, has written an engaging book that delves into the experiences and accomplishments of Wisconsin "boys" — teenagers and twenty-somethings — who enrolled in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) during the Great Depression. Although most of those who served in the CCC are no longer with us, public interest remains high in this successful federal program to provide productive work, job training, and some

formal education for millions of unemployed young men during a time of immense need. Crisply written, Apps's narrative flows easily, and many photographs complement the text. A map at the beginning of the book locates 86 camps that operated in Wisconsin between 1933, when the program began, and 1942, when mobilization for World War II suddenly changed America's economy to full employment.

Nineteen short chapters are organized into four broad topics: background of the CCC; life in CCC camps; CCC work projects; and a final section summing up the criticisms, ending, and successes of the program. The organization provides a satisfying account of how the CCC operated in Wisconsin, the range of projects completed, and what daily life was like for several enrollees whose journals, letters, and oral histories have been preserved. Apps himself was lucky enough to interview one CCC veteran in 2015, when the gentleman was in his nineties.

One of the main reasons that books on the CCC at the state level are valuable is that they often highlight enduring accomplishments that distinguished the work of enrollees, most of whom spent most of their days doing monotonous outdoor work, often in inclement weather. Even if tree planting and stabilizing eroded agricultural fields constituted monumentally important conservation achievements in the aggregate, the day-to-day work was not inspiring. We learn of one outstanding project in Wisconsin: the arboretum at the University of Wisconsin Madison. Between August 1935 and 1941, CCC enrollees at Camp Madison conducted pioneering prairie restoration under the direction of prairie ecologist Theodore Sperry and planted several woodlands on the 1,200-acre arboretum. As a former arboretum manager succinctly put it, "There wouldn't be a University of Wisconsin Arboretum without the CCC" (162).

Unfortunately, Apps does not provide a summary of CCC accomplishments in Wisconsin (such as acres reforested and miles of roads and trails constructed), so it is hard to place the activities of individual companies into a broader perspective. However, it is clear that forestry and soil conservation projects predominated. In a different vein, Apps, like many who have written about the CCC at the state level, skirts the issue of racial discrimination. Similarly, he does not address the experiences of war veterans who were eligible to enroll in the VCC (Veterans Conservation Corps), noting only that they were placed in separate facilities. This, too, is unfortunate, because it is only through state and local history that we will ever learn much about the personal experiences of those groups who do not figure prominently in the overall history of the CCC.

One final thought: a history of the CCC in Iowa awaits a writer, although much of the groundwork has been laid by (1) the creation of a

CCC museum at Backbone State Park, which contains a small archive of primary source materials; (2) a 1990 survey of CCC work in Iowa's state parks, which documented approximately 670 CCC-built structures and resulted in several historic district listings on the National Register of Historic Places; and (3) volunteers with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, who, beginning in 2001, interviewed more than 125 men who worked in the CCC, the transcripts of which are archived on the department's website (www.iowadnr.gov/Places-to-Go/State-Parks/The-CCC-Legacy).

Chemical Lands: Pesticides, Aerial Spraying, and Health in North America's Grasslands Since 1945, by David D. Vail. NeXus: New Histories of Science, Technology, the Environment, Agriculture and Medicine. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2018. xiv, 194 pp. Map, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95 hardcover and ebook.

Reviewer Julie Courtwright is associate professor of history at Iowa State University. She is the author of *Prairie Fire: A Great Plains History* (2011).

David Vail's *Chemical Lands* is an eye-opening treatment of the challenges of twentieth-century agriculture on the Great Plains. Coming out of World War II, farmers faced opportunities and trials associated with the intersection of agriculture, environment, and technology that were unique to the era. Pilots returning from war service could now adapt their airplanes, as well as their skills, to drop pesticides and herbicides onto fields from above, saving farmers the time, money, and aggravation associated with more traditional methods used to control the invasive pests and weeds that continually threatened to overwhelm crops. Farmers *could* use airplanes for weed and pest control, but *should* they? Many Great Plains farmers were hesitant. That is one of the important issues Vail examines in *Chemical Lands*.

Vail's work illuminates how much the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962 has shaped our thinking. Despite the positive impact of Carson's work, she oversimplified the perilous status of aerial spraying in her book, painting a broad and, as Vail shows, at least partially inaccurate picture of ignorant and irresponsible pilots armed with dangerous chemicals and no license to spray. The problem with Carson's perception of aerial spraying is that it lacked regional nuance. *Chemical Lands*, however, examines the practice from a regional point of view and demonstrates, through primary research, that farmers and pilots, as well as extension agents, university professors, aircraft manufacturers, and others, were, in fact, profoundly concerned about the moral and environmental implications of aerial spraying almost 20