

Midwest. Although born in the South and raised in Kansas, Overton was very much a midwesterner, which became clear when he won licenses to expand his Victory Life Insurance Company into New York and New Jersey markets; a fascinating story that reminds us of how regionally segregated markets were at this time. Finally, for people interested in state and local history, there is an excellent extended discussion of how the city of Chicago was able to restore and repurpose the *Chicago Bee Building* (built by Overton) and the Overton Hygienic Building as part of the revitalization of Bronzeville, the center of the Black Metropolis of the 1920s.

When Sunflowers Bloomed Red: Kansas and the Rise of Socialism in America, by R. Alton Lee and Steven Cox. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2020. 324 pp. Photographs, illustrations, tables, notes, index. \$29.95 hardcover.

Greg Hall is professor of history at Western Illinois University. He is an expert on labor history in the American West and the author of *Harvest Wobblies: The Industrial Workers of the World and Agricultural Labors in the American West, 1905–1930* (2001).

During the early twentieth century, socialism in the United States was at its peak in popularity. It was as much of an urban movement as it was a rural movement as recent scholarship demonstrates with studies such as David Berman's *Radicalism in the Mountain West, 1890–1920* and Jeffrey Johnson's *"They Are All Red Out Here": Socialist Politics in the Pacific Northwest, 1895–1925*. R. Alton Lee and Steven Cox offer their own similar regional study with *When Sunflowers Bloomed Red*. Most students of American socialism are familiar with the *Appeal to Reason*, the longest running and most widely read socialist newspaper in American history, which was published out of Girard, Kansas. Yet, a thorough history of socialism and related radicalism in Kansas has not received substantial scholarly attention until now. Lee and Cox examine socialism in the state thematically. They analyze the movement with a series of distinct chapters in which the authors focus on writers, politicians, women, farmers, and workers. Chronology is present as well in the study, which makes the book an analytically coherent examination of socialism over time in Kansas. The authors caution, however, that a definitive history of socialism in the state would be difficult to create due to many short-lived socialist and radical periodicals produced in Kansas having not survived for researchers to examine. The same is true for a paucity of

archival materials such as letters, unpublished memoirs, and other records from the past, which researchers rely upon to bring the past to life. Nevertheless, the authors have provided readers with a detailed history based on both primary and secondary sources that illuminates socialism and its midwestern adherents from its rise to decline in Kansas.

The thematic chapters of *When Sunflowers Bloomed Red* explore the different types of socialists and the rise of the Socialist Party of America (SPA) in Kansas. Lee and Cox begin with an overview of the *Appeal to Reason* and its founding editor Julius Augustus Wayland. The publication became a financial success for Wayland, which few other socialist or radical newspapers could match. The success of the newspaper was significant for Girard; by 1912, it was the town's largest employer. The authors argue that many Kansans who became socialists followed a similar path that began with populism, a movement that swept through the Midwest in the 1890s and for a time took control of Kansas politics. This transition is an important feature of chapter two as Lee and Cox track the careers of several prominent socialists in the state. One of the more interesting chapters focuses on women socialists, with special emphasis on Annie Diggs, who played a key role in the woman's suffrage movement. One of the primary constituencies that socialist politicians sought to appeal to were wageworkers. Miners, particularly in the southeastern corner of Kansas, proved to be loyal socialist voters. Many were foreign-born, members of the United Mine Workers of America, and found socialist policies highly compelling.

The authors provide a chapter devoted entirely to the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in the state. Although the IWW had socialists at its founding convention and had socialists in its ranks, it was not a socialist organization as the authors seem to imply. The chapter on the IWW could have been more nuanced in the connections between Wobblies (IWW members) and socialists in Kansas. They may have had similar end goals for a just and equitable society, but their means of getting there were very different. The authors are more adept with their analysis of the Nonpartisan League in the state, which was also not a socialist organization but had similar policy goals to the SPA. The last chapter is somewhat problematic in that even though it examines the activities of a number of leftists, communists, and radical organizations in the state during the Great Depression, much of the material in the chapter focuses on New Deal policies and politics, undermining the chapter's continuity with the other chapters in the book.

Despite a few minor quibbles with *When Sunflowers Bloomed Red*, the study is a significant contribution to the history of Kansas and to the Midwest in general. Although socialism was not as strong in Kansas as

it was in other midwestern states, Lee and Cox clearly demonstrate that a strain of radicalism pervaded a number of counties, towns, and cities in the state. Moreover, their scholarship underscores similar findings made by other scholars that reveal the presence of a notable level of radicalism that manifested itself in the largely rural central part of the country and in other regions as well, especially at the turn of the twentieth century. Jon Lauck, in *The Lost Region* (2013), has encouraged more midwestern scholarship in order for the region to be on par with the well-developed historical focuses that one can find in the history of the South, New England, and the West. *When Sunflowers Bloomed Red* is a welcome addition to the history of the American Midwest that should have appeal to students, scholars, and general readers.

The Rural Schools of Madison County: A Vanishing Heritage, by Ronald Howell. Winterset, IA: Ronald Howell, 2019. 254 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, index. \$44.00 paperback

Reviewer Franklin Yoder is an adjunct professor of history at the University of Iowa. He is the author of *All in One Room: A History of Country Schools in Johnson County, Iowa* (2018).

The history of rural schools in Madison County, Iowa, is well documented in Ronald Howell's account of these now defunct institutions. Books about rural schools often focus on personal memories of former students and teachers or they emphasize data about schools. Howell has included both approaches in this history by integrating each of those elements in this work.

The initial chapters cover a variety of topics related to rural schools. In addition to a brief history of rural school laws, the reader will find chapters on topics ranging from descriptions of outhouses to school fires and celebrations. The chapters in this section include anecdotes and historical documents that enrich the text.

The largest section of the book is devoted to histories of individual schools. Grouped by township, an account of the early history of each school provides data about the building along with one or two photographs. In a few instances, current photos of the school building are also included. This section of the book will be especially interesting to former students and teachers of the Madison County schools but of less interest to the general reader.

Photographs throughout the text add a visual dimension that gives readers a taste of how rural schools and students appeared. The amount