

on what constituted a model among archivists, records managers, and local public officials. What Jones has produced instead is an introduction to local records designed "to stimulate public officials to examine their current method of coping with their records problems and to evaluate the benefits that may be derived from a well-planned program incorporating a variety of controls such as inventories, retention/disposition schedules, microfilming, and intermediate storage areas" (p. 21). The first half of the book is directed primarily at records custodians, emphasizing the need for proper preservation, practical steps for establishing a local records program, and examples of successful programs of different sizes and ages. Perhaps of more interest to general readers is the second half, which examines the range of records found in local repositories, their contents, and their possible research uses.

Jones' suggested procedures for establishing a records management system for each county may underestimate the reluctance of local public officials to spend time and money on such projects. However, even if it is impossible to establish national standards and model schedules, it may be possible to establish uniform guidelines within states. State-based programs, such as NHPRC-funded projects for a microfilming program in Ohio, for a municipal records manual in Wisconsin, and for a court records survey in Massachusetts, may prove to be the only practical route to eventual control over local public records. Seasoned genealogists and local historians may not find much that is startlingly new concerning the research use of local records, but this section of the book serves as an excellent introduction to the range and possible use of such records. The author's intensive research in eight states and correspondence with state and local officials in the remaining forty-two is solid, and his recommendations are sound. Whether they will bring their intended results remains to be seen.

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Small Town Chicago: The Comic Perspective of Finley Peter Dunne, George Ade, Ring Lardner. By James DeMuth. (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1980. Pp. 122. Notes, bibliographic essay, select bibliography, index. \$11.00.)

This is a first-rate literary and sociological study of Chicago in the 1890s as seen through the fictive lenses of three humorists. To the perennial question "Can fiction faithfully

re-create a society?" James DeMuth answers yes: fiction can indeed delineate history, even if on a high level of abstraction, and fiction can dramatize environments, institutions, character types, and speech patterns. DeMuth demonstrates all of this with articulateness, logical flow, and scholarly rigor. His thesis is that in the 1890s Chicago was as provincial as the small towns from which its migrants came and that "the common intention which links Dunne, Ade, and Lardner—which distinguishes their art from [that of] the Chicago novelists—is their attempt to interpret Chicago in the nostalgic terms of a small American community" (p. 105). DeMuth supports his thesis with excerpts from and critical comments on Dunne's "Mr. Dooley," Lardner's "Haircut" and *You Know Me, Al*, and Ade's *Artie*, *Pink Marsh*, and *Chicago Stories*.

DeMuth regards Ade the gentlest of the three satirists. Unlike Dunne and Lardner, who depict 1890s Chicagoans as insecure and alienated, Ade sees Chicago as a frontier of acceptance for newcomers willing to work. Dunne re-creates the political and social life of his native St. Patrick's parish on the West Side. Mr. Dooley defends Sixth Ward "pollyticians" against the boss industrialist who "makes it a felony for annywan to buy stove polish outside iv his [company] store" (p. 43). As for Lardner, who remains controversial among the critics, DeMuth sides with those who regard the author of "Haircut" as "among the most skeptical, cynical, and heartless" of authors (p. 108). Lardner comes down hard on Chicago newcomers from Indiana and Michigan, "wise boobs who are entertaining, often, because they are insensitive to embarrassment" (p. 110).

DeMuth wisely warns that fictive pictures by these authors must be corrected for distortion by the temperaments of the authors themselves. He describes Lardner as dour—unwilling to grant affirmation except to migrants from his hometown, Niles, Michigan. Dunne appears more compassionate than Lardner. Ade, although the most humane of the three, also emerges as one who "perceived Chicago in small units that bore resemblance to his Indiana village and Purdue fraternity" (p. 110). DeMuth does report that all three authors were devotees of the Whitechapel Club, notorious for its macabre practical jokes and arrested adolescence. But again, Ade is singled out as one whose tastes, as reflected in *Pink Marsh*, are influenced by naive enthusiasm for vaudeville and minstrels (p. 57).

Although DeMuth concentrates on his three principals, he appropriately compares their works with those of their contemporaries—Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* and novels by

Henry Fuller. Surprisingly, DeMuth ignores George Barr McCutcheon's *The Sherrods* and especially McCutcheon's satirical epistolary fiction "The Waddleton Mail," which inspired more than one of Ade's character types and much of Lardner's epistolary fiction.

Still, *Small Town Chicago* remains valuable and readable. Perceptive librarians will make it one of their indispensable acquisitions.

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Minnesota Farmer-Laborism: The Third-Party Alternative. By

Millard L. Gieske. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979. Pp. ix, 389. Illustrations, tables, notes, selected bibliography, reference sources, index. \$15.00.)

Writing about a movement that is often neglected in studies of agrarian crusades, Millard L. Gieske clearly plows new ground. His history, the first major study of Minnesota Farmer-Labor politics since George H. Mayer's *The Political Career of Floyd B. Olson* (1951), exhaustively chronicles Farmer-Laborism's descent from the radical agrarian Nonpartisan League (1922) to its marriage in 1944 to the Democratic party. Sixty-four manuscript collections, several dissertations, and representative Minnesota newspaper sources provided rich documentation.

No admirer of third political parties, the author pictures Democrats as making the "third-party alternative" feasible in Minnesota. There the two-party system had become inoperative by 1920 because of Democratic weakness; thus, Farmer-Labor mobilized dissenting trade unionists and Nonpartisan League forces whom Democrats could have absorbed had the two-party system been functional. Then, despite its disturbingly radical rhetoric, Farmer-Labor rooted deeply and at the expense of Democrats who, spurning "fusion" with the new party, whiled away twenty-two years. Cooperating occasionally with such Farmer-Labor officeholders as Henrik Shipstead and Floyd B. Olson, Democratic stalwarts otherwise stayed aloof from Farmer-Labor while its bickering conservatives and radicals engineered the third party's collapse. Seemingly, Farmer-Labor's ill-fated experience proved anew that the two-party system was viable, a conclusion even of Farmer-Laborite Hjalmar Petersen who, in 1942, pronounced third parties susceptible to inevitable withering.