

war's effect on African Americans, a surprising omission given the war's far-reaching social impact on this particular group.

The main value of *Toward a Social History of the Civil War* lies in providing additional information about the war through more case studies. Although Vinovskis provides an excellent point of departure for stimulating further interest with his "Preliminary Demographic Speculations," this same level of thought-provoking inquiry is not sustained in the rest of the volume. Rather the book is more a compilation of case studies than exploratory essays. Only Civil War historians who specialize in social history will find it of interest. Had this work contained at least a bibliographical essay, which discussed the major works on the war's social history and identified areas for further study, its value and utility for undergraduate classes and the general reader would have been enhanced greatly.

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Black Towns and Profit: Promotion and Development in the Trans-Appalachian West, 1877-1915. By Kenneth Marvin Hamilton. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991. Pp. xii, 185. Notes, illustrations, appendixes, selected bibliography, index. \$29.95.)

Kenneth Marvin Hamilton relates the history of five of sixty-four documented black towns in the trans-Appalachian West between 1877 and 1915. While the book's sub-title implies broader coverage, the five towns he studies were located in the trans-Mississippi West. They are Nicodemus, Kansas; Mound Bayou, Mississippi; Langston City and Boley, Oklahoma; and Allensworth, California. A chapter is devoted to each town.

Hamilton discusses black town development as an entrepreneurial enterprise. This is in contrast to the traditional literature which largely deals with the ideological aspects of the subject. Hamilton concludes that the patterns of founding and developing black towns were essentially similar to those of white towns during the period. The developers of black town sites were primarily motivated by an interest in profit. The activities used to promote black towns paralleled those used to promote white towns. Promoters of black towns used newspaper advertisements, round-trip railroad excursions to the development site, promotional literature, and other techniques commonly used in town development at the time. Likewise, the typical black town developer tried to obtain vital railroad connections to the town site, investments in local business and industry, and support for the town's educational and community institutions.

While emphasizing the similarities in the promotion and development of black towns and white towns, the author minimizes the role of race in this history. Hamilton states, "America's racial ideology produced few notable differences in the early evolution of black towns and their white and biracial counterparts" (p. 152). Yet information contained in his book indicates that race was clearly an important factor in black town history. Black nationalist philosophy was featured in promotional literature, and it appealed directly to persons having a black separatist ideology. The fortunes of black towns were affected by the disinclination of white railroad magnates, industrialists, bankers, government officials, and farmers to do business with blacks in the years before 1915.

Nevertheless, students of black business history will find *Black Towns and Profit* to be a valuable scholarly work using a variety of primary sources including railroad company records. The considerable secondary literature on the topic is discussed at length in a bibliographic essay (Appendix Two). This unusual volume also contains much of interest to the general reader. Hoosier readers will note that no Indiana sites are listed in Appendix One, "Black Towns in the Trans-Appalachian West," thereby ignoring places like the Roberts settlement and Lyles Station.

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Promise to the Land: Essays on Rural Women. By Joan M. Jensen. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991. Pp. xii, 319. Illustrations, maps, tables, notes, index. \$27.50.)

Promise to the Land is a collection of essays, first started in 1977, by Joan M. Jensen. Half of the essays have been previously published; one essay is co-authored with Susan Armitage. The book is divided into five sections, which include traditional subjects such as rural history but also new topics such as rural social welfare. The essays cover the activities of farm women in a wide geographical area including New York, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Maryland, Washington, and New Mexico. They also touch a wide variety of ethnic groups including the Seneca Indians, Hispanics, African-American slaves, and even the life of a Lithuanian immigrant farm woman. They further cover a wide array of work areas such as picking hops, making butter, and keeping boarders. In the introduction Jensen writes, "The study of women in agricultural development begins with the inescapable reality that women have seldom had control over the land they have labored on" (p. 1). Jensen returns to this observation again and again as she deals with women in different regions and in different areas of agricultural production.