

ing congregations in Congerville and then, for twenty-five years, in Meadows. Photographs, which adorn this book, show that the Gundys were extraordinarily attractive people; sermon notes, some of which also grace this book, show that Rev. Gundy was deeply concerned about the moral hazards that endangered his flock in the 1920s. His recollections, written by his great-grandson, describe a dedicated ministry and a modest, happy life.

All of the imagined ancestral recollections here, and the author's interspersed reports on his research, provide lively, readable descriptions of Amish-Mennonite settlement in the Midwest, the Americanization of that community, and some of its people's movement into the Mennonite mainstream. Readers who need more historical information about those subjects may do well to consult Willard Smith's *Mennonites in Illinois* (1983), which is one of the few bibliographical suggestions that Gundy offers, or spend a pleasant few minutes with Cornelius J. Dyck, *An Introduction to Mennonite History* (3rd ed., 1993).

DONALD B. MARTI teaches at Indiana University's South Bend campus and studies American, mostly midwestern, rural history.

The Transformation of Rural Life: Southern Illinois, 1890–1990.

By Jane Adams. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994. Pp. xxx, 321. Illustrations, maps, tables, figures, notes, sources, index. Clothbound, \$49.95; paperbound, \$19.95.)

Anthropologist Jane Adams's study, *The Transformation of Rural Life: Southern Illinois, 1890–1990*, explores the complexities of rural change by focusing primarily on seven family farms representative of the diversity of ecological zones and settlement patterns of Union County, Illinois. Work is the central theme of this book, for "work, more than any other activity, organized and gave meaning to people's lives" (p. 4). Work is embedded in the dual narratives that Adams heard repeatedly in her fieldwork: one of poverty and hardship and one of "the plenty provided by living on a farm: never wanting for or worrying about food, the closeness of neighbors and family, the generosity and honor with which people treated one another, and the respect for hard work" (p. 1). Work is also the pivotal element in understanding Union County women's relationships to farming during the last one hundred years.

Through skillful use of her oral interviews, Adams provides eloquent and evocative descriptions of what anthropologists term "balanced reciprocity." Early twentieth-century farm families in southern Illinois, like those in Indiana, were dependent on kin, neighbors, and hired hands for their survival. In the depictions of these dense networks, readers will find patterns identical to those

described in the Indiana Extension Homemakers Association's oral history series, *Hoosier Homemakers*. Adams recognizes the importance of churches and schools in Union County communities, but because they "did not have much to do directly" with household subsistence, they "were not a central focus" of her research (p. 57). Since rural church activities in Indiana delineated and reinforced bonds of friendship and reciprocity, this seems a regrettable decision.

Adams's conclusions about women add to knowledge of the differences between regions of the country in expectations of women's roles in farming. In southern Illinois, Adams argues, women "seem to have seen themselves as farmers who were proud of the work they did and . . . felt 'ownership' in many agricultural processes" (p. 96). They worked in fields, in homes, and in poultry and dairying operations and were not receptive to the efforts by policy makers and land grant home economists to turn them into full-time homemakers. When mid-twentieth-century changes in agricultural markets and technology eliminated women's work in agricultural production (most notably in poultry and dairy), farm women did not become solely homemakers and consumers but sought paying jobs off the farm.

Adams notes that much of her book "has been told as if the world stood still for thirty years, from 1890 to 1920" (p. 132). She acknowledges that "history did not stop" but contends that "a distinctive social pattern solidified in Union County by 1890, a pattern that remained dominant through 1920" (p. 132). Although Adams's conclusion that the pace of change was relatively slow in this period is probably accurate, more attention to the economic, social, and technological changes during these years would have made her analysis more convincing and enabled her to avoid one of the pitfalls of oral reminiscences: a sense of timelessness.

The second half of this book explicitly addresses rural transformation. Adams terms the New Deal a "watershed in Union County" (p. 144), and her discussion of its impact provides a valuable case study of the variety of ways the federal government affected rural life and the role of the county extension agent in mediating between federal programs and local institutions and individuals. She pays less attention to the impact of World War II but concludes that "between the beginning of the New Deal and the end of World War II a sea change occurred in the country and in the county" (p. 160). Although most Union County farmers did not realize it at the time, a new order in agriculture was in place by the end of the war. With the increased role of government in agriculture and large-scale production and marketing systems, a series of changes took place in Union County: women lost their role in agricultural production, small farms were unable to compete with large operations, increasing numbers of rural men and women moved entirely or commuted to jobs off the farm, "rural communities shrank, and

support networks were shredded" (p. 220). It is in telling the particular details of these developments in one Illinois county that Adams makes her most important contribution to study of rural life in the twentieth-century Middle West.

BARBARA STEINSON, professor and chair of the history department, DePauw University, Greencastle, Indiana, is researching home demonstration work and rural women in early-twentieth-century Indiana.

Dearest Wilding: A Memoir. By Yvette Eastman, with love letters from Theodore Dreiser. Edited by Thomas P. Riggio. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995. Pp. xiv, 220. Illustrations, index. \$21.95.)

Important ostensibly for what it has to tell about Theodore Dreiser, this book is intrinsically interesting for what readers learn about the life and times of Yvette Szekely Eastman, whom Dreiser seduced in 1930 when she was sixteen and he was fifty-nine and at the height of his literary fame. Among the author's numerous inamoratas, Eastman has been little mentioned. She surfaced briefly in Richard Lingeman's 1990 biography as a defender of Dreiser against charges that he exploited women, and she did not appear at all in W. A. Swanberg's classic 1965 work, *Dreiser*, though her mother, Margaret, did. In *Dearest Wilding* Eastman emerges as a clear-eyed, articulate memoirist whose personal portrait of the complex Dreiser is at once sympathetic and unsentimental.

Hungarian immigrants, Yvette and her younger sister, Suzanne, attended Dreiser's Thursday evening soirees at his Rodin Studios apartment in New York with their divorced mother. They were part of a Hungarian contingent that added international flavor to the gatherings of writers, critics, actors, producers, artists, physicians, lawyers, scientists, revolutionaries, and swamis that might show up as guests of Dreiser and his more or less constant companion Helen Richardson. At one of these parties Yvette also met the man whom she would eventually marry, the radical intellectual Max Eastman. In 1931, as a forty-eight-year-old married man, he also seduced her.

Separated from her father, who lived in Budapest, Yvette grew increasingly alienated from her eccentric and jealous mother, eventually discovering to her surprise that Margaret was not her real mother at all. Dreiser became surrogate father as well as lover, and his letters to Yvette continued until his death in 1945. "I leaned like water toward this substitute for a father's 'guidance and protection,'" she confides (p. 51), and Dreiser, self-interested though he was, gave her what she needed.

Dreiser's extraordinary capacity to live amid intrigue and deceit and to engage in numerous romantic entanglements simulta-