

an understanding of the fair's impact on St. Louis or the goals of fair planners themselves should look elsewhere (to works such as Robert W. Rydell's *All the World's A Fair*, 1984).

Although the authors make clear in the acknowledgments that they had limited goals, discussion of a number of relevant topics would have improved the book. What, for example, did the fair's organizers hope the celebration would do for St. Louis? How did the fair's theme of "industrial progress" compare with themes of other civic events in St. Louis history? Furthermore, the theme was remarkably similar to themes of both the Veiled Prophet parades of the late nineteenth century and the St. Louis Pageant and Masque of 1914. Veiled Prophet organization members, fair planners, and pageant organizers usually came from the same segment of St. Louis society and believed these events provided important chances to engage in civic instruction of the population. Some sort of attempt to place the themes of the World's Fair in context with those of other civic events would have added to an understanding of the fair's place in St. Louis history and does not seem outside the scope of the book.

The World's Fair of 1904 is often looked upon by St. Louisans nostalgically as the high point of St. Louis's history and place in the world. While this beautiful book succeeds in showcasing the society's wonderful collection of fair photographs, it does little more than add to this nostalgia for the "World's Fair Era."

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Researching Western History: Topics in the Twentieth Century. Edited by Gerald D. Nash and Richard W. Etulain. ([Albuquerque]: University of New Mexico Press, in cooperation with University of New Mexico Center for the American West, 1997. Pp. ix, 220. Notes, index. \$50.00.)

This book, edited by two well-known figures in twentieth century western history, consists of an introduction by Earl Pomeroy and eight essays on various topics. The topics include economic history, natural resources and the environment, urban development, politics, women, cultural history, and the myth of the West. The final chapter by Gene M. Gressley attempts to reach conclusions about the previous essays and to provide some overarching ideas and possibilities for the future course of western history. The central purpose of the book is to encourage new research and to suggest possible topics that merit scholarly investigation.

Are there significant themes that emerge from the eight essays? One such theme seems to be the unevenness of previous coverage of

topics. While some subjects have been researched adequately, several writers point out that others have received little or no attention. A related criticism is that western historians have too often failed to relate their studies to the national and global scenes. This weakness, as Gressley particularly stresses, is a serious flaw because recent western events have increasingly been connected to overseas trends and developments. Some of the writers seem to concentrate too much on what has been done in the field and provide too few suggestions as to what needs to be done. Gerald D. Nash's essay on economic history and Glenda Riley's chapter on western women, however, both display a complete mastery of their subjects and contain excellent proposals for future research.

Although none of the writers are identified strongly with the New Western History, passages devoted to the environment, minorities, women, urban development, the western myth, and cultural developments reveal the influence of that school. In line with the New Western History, the field has greatly broadened in terms of the topics now covered and in a tendency to expand focus into the twentieth century.

Books such as this are not always enjoyable reading, but they are extremely important. The essays in the present study allow readers to gauge recent trends in twentieth-century western history and to see some of the possibilities for additional research opportunities.

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Peasant Maids—City Women: From the European Countryside to Urban America. Edited by Christiane Harzig. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997. Pp. xii, 344. Notes, maps, illustrations, tables, index. Clothbound, \$39.95; paperbound, \$16.95.)

Peasant Maids is the emigration story of single women from four villages or rural communes in Germany, Poland, Ireland, and Sweden to Chicago in the late nineteenth century. The areas of origin in Germany (Mecklenburg) and in Sweden (Dalsland) produced a relatively small slice of the immigrant populations of Chicago and may not be representative of those specific groups or their unmarried female immigrants. Even so some of the behaviors of these newcomers in the Windy City appear to be typical. The Polish and Irish samples, on the face of it, seem to be more representative of their compatriots.

Christiane Harzig's study of these four groups of single women contends that (1) single women improved their lives and enjoyed