

or her response to the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s. Nevertheless, Barrows effectively describes the process by which Bacon achieved success and fame, assesses her contributions to progressivism, situates Indiana in the national scene, and weighs Bacon's commitments to gender equality. One of a mere handful of books on Indiana women's history, Barrows's fine biography of Bacon should serve as a model and an inspiration for more work in this area.

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Provincial Lives: Middle-class Experience in the Antebellum Middle West. By Timothy R. Mahoney. (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1999. Pp. x, 334. Maps, tables, illustrations, appendices, notes, selected bibliography, index. \$54.95.)

Timothy R. Mahoney offers his history of the antebellum upper Mississippi valley as an example of "regional history." In a previous book, *River Towns in the Great West* (1990), Mahoney described the transportation and economic structure of the region, and in this latest book he studies the social life based on that structure. His premise is that people lived in a regional, not a local, context.

Mahoney's study centers on three families: Elihu Washburne, a Yankee from Maine who lived in Galena, Illinois; the Langworthy brothers, Yankees from upstate New York who lived in Dubuque, Iowa; and Orville Browning, a Kentuckian who settled in Quincy, Illinois. All lived in the "near" frontier around St. Louis during the steamboat era. Chicago, however, gradually became the center of the region during the railroad era of the 1850s and 1860s. The region therefore became more northern in economic, political, and cultural orientation.

The three families embraced a "gentility," or middle-class culture, based upon evangelical Christianity (usually Presbyterianism), capitalism, and republicanism which contrasted with the male subculture of "ruffians" prevalent on the frontier. Such gentility was displayed by residence in a Greek Revival house, support of the Whig party, and social reciprocity with other genteel folk by participation in balls and dinner parties.

Washburne and Browning were both prominent lawyers. Through their experiences Mahoney studies the "social geography of law" in Illinois, including circuit riding in order to enhance revenue and political connections and the genteel culture of the law library staff at the supreme court sessions in Springfield. Lawyers also became adept at railroad law in the 1850s and, using prior extralocal connections, were movers in creating regional railroad companies.

Mahoney's study rests on meticulous archival research of localities, families, the legal profession, and railroads in his region. It will

appeal to specialists in the field, but it may not engage the general reader. Also, his concept of region, which is based upon transport and social networks, does not deal with the issue of cultural uniqueness. Was the upper Mississippi Valley culturally simply a western extension of the antebellum Northeast, just as the greater Midwest is presented in Andrew Cayton and Peter Onuf's, *The Midwest and the Nation* (1990)? Or did the Midwest possess a regional identity different from the East? This is an important question that Mahoney might have explored more thoroughly.

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Southern Seed, Northern Soil: African-American Farm Communities in the Midwest, 1765–1900. By Stephen A. Vincent. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999. Pp. xvii, 224. Maps, tables, illustrations, appendix, notes, index. \$35.00.)

Southern Seed, Northern Soil focuses on the rural communities of Beech and Roberts, and the people of African descent who settled and lived in this area of central Indiana during the nineteenth century. Coming from adjacent counties in North Carolina and Virginia, the pioneers were free men and women of mixed ancestry who were looking to escape racial tensions and improve their economic condition as owners of land. After leaving the South in the late 1820s and early 1830s, they settled in areas where land was inexpensive and situated close enough to Quaker settlements to provide them with a sense of security. Although their migration to the Old Northwest “led to markedly improved opportunities,” they still faced “disadvantages associated with their status as free people of color” (p. 47).

Stephen A. Vincent shows that landownership as a “form of power and control” (p. xvi) was central to the experience of Beech and Roberts residents well before freedmen pressed for “forty acres and a mule” after the Civil War. For the people of Beech and Roberts, landownership not only became a source of material improvement, it also helped create a buffer zone that put African Americans at a distance from hostile whites. Community institutions like churches and schools were symbols of autonomy and success. Built away from racial violence and discrimination, these institutions contributed to an identity that set their members apart from most other African Americans.

The children and grandchildren of the Beech and Roberts pioneers confronted marginal prospects in the area, especially after the Civil War when changes in the nation's economy increased farm debts. Yet, life in the rural Midwest was better than that offered blacks living in increasing numbers in the region's urban centers before the Great Migration. Those who did emigrate from Beech and