

the fields of environmental history and environmental justice studies.

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A Good Day's Work
An Iowa Farm in the Great Depression
 By Dwight W. Hoover

(Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2007. Pp. vii, 211. Illustrations, index. \$26.00.)

In this richly detailed accounting of the ways of another time, Dwight Hoover shares with us his youthful experiences of life on an Iowa farm in the 1930s. The work was often difficult, even grueling, but for a bright and thoughtful boy it was the stuff of a strong foundation and, for us, a fine memoir.

The book is divided into the seasons of the year interspersed with chapters called respites, which add depth and context to the story. Few of us have had anything like the experiences of the author, and whatever our romanticized notions of the workings of a family farm may be, they are put to the test by this keen remembrance of both work and respite.

Although quite different in style and purpose, the book calls to mind Hamlin Garland's Middle Border stories of the late nineteenth century. But this work is written by one of the country's leading social historians about a time of great transition on the farm. It is, in a way, a memorial to a whole order of American experience. The changes in farming

brought on by social and economic conditions and perhaps most of all by mechanization are laid out by one who grew up in the midst of them. Not always knowing how to cope with the often mind-boggling changes underway, shackled by mortgages, the family weathered on, and indeed persevered, by employing what Hoover declares to be, "A Good Day's Work."

What did that work entail? The plowing and disking of fields, the stages of cultivation of corn, haying from the planting to the loft, are all covered. Livestock care, management, and slaughter are vividly described, sometimes too much so for urban sensibilities. Ever wonder why there aren't as many barns in today's countryside? Read this book. It also provides an understanding of a farm boy's relationship to organizations that taught a life of agriculture. The author competitively raised and showed sheep while participating in 4-H and Future Farmers of America. His remembrances of these clubs indicates that they taught him valuable lessons.

After World War II and graduation from college, Hoover concluded that farming was not for him, and he gives a heartfelt description of this crucial choice. There are basic truths to Hoover's story beyond the life of an Iowa youth. What was true in Iowa was also true in Indiana and across the nation. Today we are experiencing transitional upheavals in agriculture that are just as revolutionary, and Dr. Hoover's story can still be instructive.

In 1927, Uncle Dave Macon recorded a song that included these lyrics: "The one room schoolhouse I've been told/Is raising quite an

alarm/Cause you get a country boy educated/And he ain't gonna work at the farm." Dwight Hoover's choice was not as simple and direct, but he still chose not to work at the farm. He became a historian instead, and his boyhood experiences helped him to do so.

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Slavery and Politics in the Early Republic

By Matthew Mason

(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006. Pp. xii, 339. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$45.00.)

The debates over slavery appear in U. S. history textbooks and survey courses at a few selected points. The founders bickered about the peculiar institution during the Constitutional Convention, laying down markers that would frame debates for generations, but after 1790 those issues were safely swept under the rug. In 1819 slavery briefly returned to politics with the debates over the Missouri Compromise, but the issue really did not enter national political discourse until the 1830s, and the sectional crisis emerged as a serious threat only in the 1850s. Or so the story goes.

In this deeply researched monograph, Matthew Mason challenges conventional wisdom by shifting our gaze from the immediate antebellum years to the first decades of the Early Republic. Through a close reading of political speeches, pamphlets, and newspaper editorials, Mason demonstrates that slavery never disappeared from public discussions. Politicians on both sides of the political aisle routinely found ways to use the peculiar institution to their advantage. In the early nineteenth century, national and international debates about slavery shaped regional differences between the North and the South (and within