

them to enlist. Would soldiers, if pressed, have articulated an understanding of the necessity of emancipation? Certainly there is enough circumstantial evidence to suggest that many would have, but the emphasis that Oakes has placed on this ideology will reignite the debate over the political and ideological motives of Northern citizens and soldiers.

Ultimately, the problems in Oakes's work are minor; they stem from the impressive scope of his project and from his attempt to reposition Republican ideology and policy within a historical narrative. As such, addressing the nuances of dissent would have been impractical within the framework of this project, but their absence offers an avenue for future research into the complex

relationships between federal policy and local responses. In all, *Freedom National* is an excellent contribution to our understanding of the ideological motivations of northerners. It follows in the footsteps of works such as William C. Harris's *With Charity For All* (1997), Eric Foner's *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men* (1995), Chandra Manning's *What this Cruel War Was Over* (2007), and Gary Gallagher's recent *The Union War* (2011), in illustrating just how complex the ideological tenets that drove the Union war effort remain even nearly 150 years after the last shots were fired.

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*From Missouri*  
*An American Farmer Looks Back*  
 By Thad Snow

(Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2012. Pp. v, 283. Illustrations, index. Paperbound, \$25.00.)

Thad Snow's personal account of agricultural change in the first half of the twentieth century remains as instructive for readers today as it was when first published in 1954. An ordinary dirt farmer who was eventually drawn into the national scene in Washington, Snow shot straight from the hip, proving that a common man could indeed do uncommon things to influence government policies. His perspective on changes in American

agriculture—including his pacifist beliefs, which are woven into the account as one-liners—provides a valuable addition to the more standard accounts that academics and officials have given of those same changes.

Thad Snow was born in 1881 in Greenfield, Indiana, where aspiring author James Whitcomb Riley was a friend. Choosing not to pursue a professional career, Snow turned to farming as a young man. In 1911 he

moved to the last Midwest frontier—the delta of southeastern Missouri—and remained a farmer there until his retirement around 1950, when he wrote this retrospective account.

One theme of Snow's book is the conversion of southeastern Missouri from a midwestern economy of corn, wheat, and hogs into a part of the cotton-growing South. This economic transformation involved demographic conversion from white owner-operator farmers to a system of white plantation owners and mostly black sharecroppers and tenants. Snow also address the conversion of the area's wetlands (Snow coined the term "Swampeast Missouri" for the region) into a deforested, drained landscape that became Missouri's richest agricultural region. He witnessed the demise of these wetlands and an accompanying shift from pre-mechanized farming to large-scale, mechanized farming.

Yet Snow's most instructive theme is the increasing role of government in agriculture. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' flood control efforts had devastating effects on the region's poor, mostly black, farmworkers. Snow shows how New Deal programs, despite good intentions, failed to achieve their goals—thanks to manipulation by the wealthy landowners. The climax of his account concerns the Missouri Bootheel's famous 1939 roadside demonstrations, which drew national attention to the plight of the landless, and which white landowner neighbors blamed Snow for organizing. These spontaneous demonstra-

tions were prompted by the misallotment of government payments that should have gone to tenants and sharecroppers, but were kept by the plantation operators. Snow's appearance before congressional committees, and his work with Washington officials to resolve the embarrassment to the government, gave the author his place in history that extends well beyond the local scene.

This is a reprint of the original book of the same title published by Houghton Mifflin in 1954. The process of digitizing Snow's work seems to have introduced many errors that were not corrected by editing. Readers will find their progress disrupted by encountering, for example, "bad" for "had," "lock" for "look," and "crone" for "came." Missing or misplaced periods and commas are also frequent.

The editor chose not to include any explanatory footnotes, and her brief introduction provides too little information about Snow himself. Readers can compensate for this with Bonnie Stepenoff's excellent biography, *Thad Snow: A Life of Social Reform in the Missouri Bootheel* (2003).

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