

REVIEWS

Scattering the Seeds of Knowledge: The Words and Works of Indiana's Pioneer County Extension Agents

By Frederick Whitford

(West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 2017. Pp. 789. Illustrations, notes, index. \$49.95.)

Frederick Whitford's large and thorough tome follows the history of Indiana's county extension agents from the program's precursors in the 1880s through the tumultuous 1920s, years that set the stage for the trials of the Great Depression. Whitford has combed through the records of the Indiana Extension Service, searching for the issues that animated and motivated the earliest extension agents. A good bit of his material came from the annual reports that agents filed, as well as from extension bulletins developed to educate farmers. His research is exhaustive.

Whitford lays out the early days of the service, when farmers were reluctant to participate in programs, given the newness and novelty of the service. He covers the trials and tribulations, such as battles with hog cholera and foot-and-mouth disease. He follows the

developments of World War I, when extension activities and farmer participation took on new and vital meaning. The 1920s, which he calls "the Miserable Years," set the stage for the Great Depression, with farmers learning how to improve their operations in the face of enormous hardships.

Whitford's book is not just a tale of men teaching other men how to farm. He spends time with other aspects of extension as well. The children and their corn clubs, precursors to 4-H, have a place in the story, as do the 4-H clubs that came to prominence following World War I. Club leaders promoted various kinds of improved and scientific farming to children, hoping that those children would, in turn, teach their elders the gospel of extension. Women are also a part of the story, with an emphasis on the technological changes within the home that agents

promoted, and a nod to the development of various home programs, such as those devoted to nutrition.

This book is an insider's history of the Indiana Extension Service, which covers its development from the perspective of the extension agents. The author gets inside the heads of these individuals who struggled to bring a particular vision of agriculture, and with it the hope of prosperity, to the state's farmers. What it isn't, is a story from the other side. We find out that farmers were at times resistant to the extension message, but we don't find out from the farmer's point of view why this resistance existed. There is a wealth of literature discussing the resistance of both farm men and women to the extension program, but that information is not a part of this story. It is probably just as well, because that would have added considerably to what is already a quite

substantial book. As it is, *Scattering the Seeds of Knowledge* is both useful and interesting, and tells us much about the difficulties, as well as the triumphs, of working in the field as an extension agent. It is illustrated with an abundance of beautiful pictures of early twentieth-century Indiana farms, which adds greatly to the appeal of the book. The pictures of farm children, in particular, are lovely. While it may not provide all the information a scholar would want, *Scattering the Seeds of Knowledge* fulfills its own purposes admirably, providing an in-depth history of the origins of extension in Indiana, from the point of view of the Extension Service itself.

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Great Crossings: Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in the Age of Jackson

By Christina Snyder

(New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. xii, 402. Notes, index. \$29.95.)

In *Great Crossings: Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in the Age of Jackson*, Christina Snyder moves beyond standard histories of nineteenth-century American expansion and “begins in the interior of the continent and looks outward to . . . broaden our gaze” (p. 16). Specifically, she examines the Indians, settlers, and

slaves who lived in the “experimental community” of Great Crossings near Lexington, Kentucky (p. 4). Named after a nearby eighteenth-century bison ford, Great Crossings featured a mélange of Indians, whites, and blacks who “articulated new visions of the continent’s future” by promoting a