

# The Maid Narratives: Black Domesticity and the White Families in the Jim Crow South

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onboard, as well as the consignees of the cargo waiting upstream. Chapter seven briefly addresses the decline of steamboat commerce by the 1870s as railroads expanded westward.

Ultimately, the trail of the *Bertrand* impresses upon readers the many connections that existed within the vast steamboat network that covered the Ohio, Mississippi, and Missouri river valleys. Switzer successfully demonstrates how that network linked commerce, transportation, and migration throughout the region, and provides insight into the peak of the steamboat era and the final years before the first transcontinental railroad heralded the steamboat's decline. The book would have benefited from additional attention to more recent secondary literature on the subject. It lacks mention of Adam Kane's book, *The Western River Steamboat* (2004), which was part of a series on nautical archeology. Switzer does engage with William Lass's *The History of Steamboating on the Upper Missouri* (1962) but fails to mention Lass's more recent work, *Navigating the Missouri: Steamboating on Nature's Highway, 1819–1935* (2007). Bibliographical references to newer syntheses of western history, like Anne F. Hyde's *Empires, Nations, and Families: A History of the North American West, 1800–1860* (2011), also would have strengthened the book.

These suggestions notwithstanding, Switzer's work provides a valuable resource for scholars focused on the steamboat era, Missouri River commerce, nineteenth-century material culture, or the trans-Mississippi West. Switzer's explanations of the design of light-draft steam-driven river vessels will appeal especially to those interested in the history of technology. Anyone familiar with the *Bertrand* Discovery Site in Missouri Valley, Iowa, will also enjoy learning more about this fascinating capsule of the past. Overall, the work provides an excellent companion to the first assessment of the *Bertrand* written in 1974 by Jerome T. Petsche, to whom the book is dedicated.

*The Maid Narratives: Black Domesticity and the White Families in the Jim Crow South*, by Katherine van Wormer, David W. Jackson III, and Charletta Sudduth. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012. xviii, 298 pp. Illustrations, references, index. \$36.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Valerie Grim is professor and chair of the Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies at Indiana University. Her research and writing have mostly focused on African American women in the rural U.S. South, but she is also the author of "African Americans in Iowa Agriculture: A Portrait," in *Outside In: African-American History in Iowa, 1838–2000* (2001).

For some time now, we have known that black and white life in the American South was quite intertwined. Despite the terror of slavery,

Jim Crow, and segregation, there existed in paternalistic ways very personal relationships between some whites and some blacks that evolved in the personal, social, and economic spaces of the South. Those relationships were marked by the hypocritical ways the white elite internalized race and viewed the poor, especially black people. Their contradictory interactions could be seen in the lives of black domestic workers and the realities they shared with white women and children. Throughout American history, black domestics played significant roles in the lives of white people, while also remaining “invisible” as humans. The work performed by black domestics shared many commonalities, but their services take on special meaning when examined within the context of southern norms—a perspective that readers may gain from reading *The Maid Narratives: Black Domestics and the White Families in the Jim Crow South*, a well-documented and insightful book written by three researchers: a sociologist, a producer of oral history projects, and a consultant on early childhood.

In *The Maid Narratives*, Katherine van Wormer, David W. Jackson III, and Charletta Sudduth present aspects of the lives of housekeepers, caretakers, sharecroppers, and cooks who worked as domestics prior to their migration from the South. While we have many texts on this subject, including the recent highly regarded *The Warmth of Other Suns* and *The Help*, we do not have enough stories about the lives of ordinary migrants who left families, friends, and cultures behind during the first and second waves. For those with whom we have become familiar, we have learned why, how, and when they made their journey north. But through the voices of such persons as Pearline Sisk Jones, Irene Williams, Melvin Scott, and Gloria Kirkland, individuals whose narratives are included in this volume, we now know more.

The book is divided into three parts. Part one comprises background information, including history, context, and an analysis of research concerning women of the Great Migration. Part two presents the narratives of maids in their own words. Part three discusses narratives of white families that employed domestic help. Within each part, there are several chapters. Chapters 1–3 focus on methods and issues concerning the use of oral history and the reliability of memory; chapters 4 and 5 provide the maids’ perspectives on such experiences as education, religion, and social interactions; and chapters 6 and 7 portray the reflections of white women who employed black help. Taken together, these chapters provide invaluable insights into the lives of black women, including grandmothers and great-grandmothers, who have been marginalized or overlooked in the literature.

Readers will find the methodology employed by Wormer, Jackson, and Sudduth useful in understanding the presentation of the maids' narratives. They conducted 23 interviews, 17 of which are presented in this book. Most of the data came from women who migrated to Iowa. What is presented in this volume is transformative because we hear black maids putting voices to experiences, moving us from discourses concerning theories of race, class, and place to a practical understanding. Equally intriguing is how white women of today, in an age of political correctness, describe their role as former employers, seeing themselves at times as distant family members. In an objective and integrated fashion, these three scholars have communicated a grand narrative about white life and black help. Readers can form their own conclusions regarding these human relations and decide whether they tell a different story of migration from the South to the Midwest.

Scholars and critics, distrustful of oral history and memory, might question the work's reliability, interpretations, and rigor. But the methodologies and theories used in researching, framing, writing, and compiling this collection are appropriate and capture stunningly well this aspect of America's past. Policymakers and those responsible for implementing social and political policies should appreciate this volume. Students and scholars of Iowa history will find it useful for understanding black life and the struggle for humanity in the United States.

*Orange City*, by Doug Anderson, Tim Schlak, Greta Grond, and Sarah Kaltenbach. Images of America Series. Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2014. 127 pp. Illustrations, maps, bibliography. \$21.99 paperback.

Reviewer David Zwart is assistant professor of history at Grand Valley State University, Allendale, Michigan. His research and writing have focused on Dutch American communities in the Midwest.

This thin, heavily illustrated book packs a surprisingly serious historical punch. The introduction provides an overview of the Dutch immigrant pioneers who founded Orange City in the northwest corner of Iowa. The first three chapters cover the founding years from 1869 to 1901, the early twentieth century to 1929, and the Great Depression and war years. Each of these chapters begins with a brief overview followed by a photo essay on the developments in the town during that period. Two thematic chapters follow, one on Northwestern Academy/College and the other on the Tulip Festival. Those chapters chart how those important institutions changed over time. The final chapter covers the post-World War II era to the present, particularly highlighting business developments.