

Sounds of the New Deal: The Federal Music Project in the West

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of the Great Depression. Unable to make ends meet, Margaret Kaquatosh sent nine-year-old Raymond to the Menominee Boarding School at Keshena. After his return home a year later, Raymond worked various odd jobs to help provide for his family. During the winter of 1935 he encountered a lone timber wolf that he tamed and befriended. The wolf, whom Raymond named Kernel, became a close companion and protector for the next 20 years. Following U.S. entry into World War II, Raymond enlisted in the Marine Corps and served in the South Pacific, where he was wounded in action and contracted malaria. Upon his demobilization and return home, Raymond attended high school in Wausau. There he met and married his wife, Elaine. In 1947, at Elaine's urging, Raymond entered flight school; in August of that year he became one of the first Menominee Indians to earn a pilot's license.

Little Hawk and the Lone Wolf provides an important Native American perspective on the trials and tribulations many midwesterners faced during the Great Depression and World War II eras. Although he was the occasional victim of racism and racially inspired stereotyping, Kaquatosh also experienced compassion, respect, and kindness from boarding school personnel, military officials, and hospital staff. His memoir is invariably upbeat and optimistic. Because of the graphic nature of some of his wartime recollections and periodic irreverent humor, the book is not appropriate for young children but would certainly be suitable for high schoolers and above.

Sounds of the New Deal: The Federal Music Project in the West, by Peter Gough. Music in American Life. Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2015. xvi, 259 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$50.00 hardcover.

Reviewer Kenneth J. Bindas is professor of history and chair of the History Department at Kent State University. His books include *All of This Music Belongs to the Nation: The WPA's Federal Music Project and American Society, 1935-1939* (1996).

Sounds of the New Deal is an interesting and informative book about the WPA's Federal Music Project (FMP) and its influence and effect on the American West. In it Peter Gough argues that "the WPA music programs in the West left behind an enduring legacy that has shaped the region's social, cultural, political, and even historical progress to the present day" (88).

Many sections of the book are enlightening. The discussion of the FMP in Colorado, Utah, Oregon, and Washington best captures the essence of Gough's argument, as he does well in that chapter to define what he means by the West and how the FMP projects in those states

exemplified that definition. Also, his discussions of Paul Lawrence Dunbar and William Grant Still resonate with the FMP ideal of inclusion. The same holds true for the section on *Take Your Choice*, produced by the Northern California Project in late 1936. In those sections and others the writing is clear and focused.

However, *Sounds of the New Deal* suffers from general overstatements. On page 5, for example, Gough writes that the FMP “*can* only be understood through a regional lens” (italics his). Later he adds that only by looking at the FMP through that lens can it be understood because of the “preeminence of regionalist thought during the Depression era” (192). While regionalism was significant, this assertion lacks credibility for several reasons. First, although Gough does define his notion of the West in the chapter identified above, he devotes a significant amount of space to discussing the FMP in the South, the Plains, and even the Northeast, suggesting a far more national program. A regional or even local study of the FMP or any New Deal program may certainly add to our understanding of its operation and effect, but that is *not* the *only* legitimate way to study it. Second, the FMP was a *federal* project until it transferred more control to states in 1939. Until then, localities, states, and regions had to get approval from the federal office before any activities could start. In fact, Gough discusses those negotiations in detail, particularly regarding California, New Mexico, Charles Seeger, and folk music, all of which reinforce the level of control and oversight by the federal office. So to suggest that federal direction was not a keystone of the FMP or any New Deal project from 1933 until 1939 ignores the complex battles FDR, as well as national directors like Hopkins, Fletcher, Perkins, and many other New Deal leaders faced from governors, members of Congress, and local administrators. Gough also seems unsure of what the FMP as a regional exercise promoted. Often it seems as though he is advocating the inclusionist vision of the New Deal, especially when comparing the FMP’s activities to the ideas of the new western history movement. At other times he links the western region’s FMP to the ideals of the Popular Front, suggesting that the FMP in the West “best expressed the powerful Popular Front ideals that enveloped the expanding New Deal coalition” (9).

Sounds of the New Deal does succeed in challenging the reader. Gough makes good use of sources to weave a passionate and driven narrative. That being the case, perhaps one can overlook some of the grandiose claims and take the book for what it is—a detailed examination of the FMP’s activities in the area west of the Rocky Mountains.