

The Crops Look Good: News from a Midwestern Family Farm

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discussion of the local people who make movements happen. Two of the MOWM's particularly powerful driving forces were their belief in the psychological importance of an all-black movement and the centrality of respectability. To prove racists wrong, MOWM insisted on African Americans conducting themselves with dignity and refinement. The St. Louis MOWM also emphasized collaboration across class lines and affiliations. Lucander especially excels at exploring the network created by reformers who labored against racism during World War II. If judged by its eight-point program, MOWM cannot be judged successful. But Lucander sees it as a success: "MOWM served as a conduit, introducing and refining techniques that would ultimately overthrow de jure racial segregation in the United States within the next two decades" (176). The organization also fostered leadership skills in its members, and some of these "individuals would use their experiences of fighting racism in World War II to jump-start a lifetime of activism" (192).

The Crops Look Good: News from a Midwestern Family Farm, by Sara DeLuca. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2015. ix, 254 pp. Map, illustrations, family tree, source notes, index. \$17.95 paperback.

Reviewer Pamela Riney-Kehrberg is professor of history at Iowa State University. She is the author of *The Nature of Childhood: An Environmental History of Growing Up in America since 1865* (2014) and *Childhood on the Farm: Work, Play, and Coming of Age in the Midwest* (2005).

Poet and writer Sara DeLuca grew up in Polk County, Wisconsin. *The Crops Look Good: News from a Midwestern Family Farm* is the story of her parents and grandparents, told through family letters, local newspapers, and family lore, including oral histories. The family was large. As the parents' nine children left home and made their way to farms, jobs, and marriages, they wrote to their mother about their new experiences, and she, in turn, wrote to them about life at home on the farm. Woven through all of this are bits and pieces of local and national news. There's a lot going on in this story, with cows being milked, school being taught, and babies being born. It's a particular family's story, but one that will seem familiar to those with roots in the nation's rural midsection.

There is much that this book does right. It is well written and engaging and successfully takes readers to an earlier era of family farming in the upper Midwest. One problem with the writing, however, is that the author has written in the present tense, which is a bit of a jolt in a family history. Once the reader adjusts to that, however, it be-

comes a much better read. The interweaving of local and national news with family stories helps readers understand the interplay between these larger and smaller worlds, and how lives went on, in spite of the massive changes occurring during those years.

Unfortunately, the reader (or at least this reader) comes away wanting unresolved issues resolved and wondering about how it all turned out. Probably because of the availability of family documents, it becomes mostly the story of DeLuca's mother, Helen, and less the story of the larger family. In particular, I wanted to know in greater detail how things turned out for Adele. Did she ever divorce her problematic husband? What about her son, with all of his many physical challenges? What happened to him? Details are thin on the changes ahead for the rest of the family as well. DeLuca comments in the epilogue that her generation no longer lives on the farm, but how, when, and why did that transition occur?

These are not the only mysteries in the book, and some are quite sensitive. One presented itself with Adele's letter of January 15, 1935. What she described would seem to be her seeking out and having an abortion in response to a pregnancy coming too soon after the birth of her disabled son. Is that, in fact, what she was describing? More discussion (any discussion) would help to shed light on a very important Great Depression story about the problems of obtaining effective contraception and the troubles families faced when trying to deal with a child's disabilities. This is a place where readers should not be left wondering what happened. The same might be said of the family's struggles with mental illness, with one son committing suicide and a second suffering to an extent requiring hospitalization at least once. Was Donny able to deal successfully with his illness and live a reasonably happy life in spite of the limits of effective treatment at mid-century? This good book would be made better with just a little more attention to these and the other issues mentioned above.

Seventh Generation Earth Ethics: Native Voices of Wisconsin, by Patty Loew. Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2014. ix, 230 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$22.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Patrick Nunnally is coordinator of the River Life Program, part of the Institute for Advanced Study at the University of Minnesota. His Ph.D. dissertation (University of Iowa, 1990) was "Visions of Sustainable Place: Voice, Land, and Culture in Rural America."

This collection of twelve interviews with Native American leaders from Wisconsin delivers exactly what the title promises, distinctive voices