

## Lost Buxton

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that help clarify things for readers. This impressive volume makes a significant contribution to furthering our understanding of the Norwegian American experience.

*Lost Buxton*, by Rachele Chase. Images of America Series. Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2017. 127 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, index. \$21.99 paperback.

Reviewer Pam Stek recently received her Ph.D. in history from the University of Iowa. Her publications include "Muchakinock: African Americans and the Making of an Iowa Coal Town" (*Annals of Iowa*, 2009).

Imagining a community that no longer exists is a difficult task, especially when that community was, in many ways, unlike any that had come before or followed after. The coal-mining town of Buxton, Iowa, is one such place, but one that is made more accessible by the photographs and oral histories presented in Rachele Chase's *Lost Buxton*. Chase's work sheds light on the lost world of Buxton, with its integrated workplaces, schools, and neighborhoods, and on the hope it offered to its residents.

Much has been written about Buxton, a south-central Iowa coal town that was home to a large number of African American miners and their families. In 1900 the Consolidation Coal Company moved its mining operations from nearby Muchakinock to the new community of Buxton. The town offered black residents, many of whom had migrated from Virginia, the chance to work and live relatively free from discrimination and segregation, a rare opportunity in the early twentieth century. In Buxton black and white residents resided next to each other, black and white miners earned the same wages, and black and white children attended the same schools. In addition to coal miners and their families, numerous African American business owners and professionals, including doctors, dentists, lawyers, teachers, and pharmacists, made the town their home. As with many coal-mining communities, Buxton's star rose and fell rapidly. The mines were almost completely played out by 1918, and Buxton soon became a ghost town.

*Lost Buxton* contributes to the existing literature on Buxton by presenting a visual representation of the community and its residents. A number of the images in *Lost Buxton* have been previously published in other works. Many, however, have not. Chase provides an original and compelling grouping of the photographs and matches them with excerpts from former residents' memories of the community, in the process illuminating topics such as daily life in Buxton, the backgrounds and accomplishments of local leaders, and race relations in the town. The photographs in *Lost Buxton* convey the dignity, sense of hope, and

aspirations of the town's residents in ways that words alone cannot, and Chase's pairing of photographs with quotations from former residents' oral histories serves to further elucidate the images' meanings.

Chase provides a balanced assessment of Buxton as "utopia" versus a "dangerous" coal town. She acknowledges that Buxton experienced its share of gambling, drinking, and violent crime but points out that its legacy was shaped in large part by the politics of racial identity. Both black and white residents of the town described Buxton as a good place to live and work, but for African Americans its demise represented a much greater blow, the loss of one place where they could work, live, shop, and learn free from extreme racism and oppression. *Lost Buxton* provides a window onto the promise of racial harmony that Buxton represented, albeit fleetingly, and asks its readers to contemplate the lessons that it might continue to offer today.

*A New Deal for South Dakota: Drought, Depression, and Relief, 1920–1941*, by R. Alton Lee. Pierre: South Dakota Historical Society Press, 2016. xii, 269 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$24.95 paperback.

Reviewer Catherine McNicol Stock is professor of history and director of the American Studies program at Connecticut College. She is the author of *Rural Radicals: Righteous Rage in the American Grain* (1996) and *Main Street in Crisis: The Great Depression and the Old Middle Class on the Northern Plains* (1992).

Nearly two decades have passed since a full-length treatment of the experience of the people of South Dakota in the "Dirty Thirties" has been published; the library shelf of recent monographs considering the Great Depression years in nearby midwestern states is similarly strikingly bare. But that is only one reason to welcome University of South Dakota professor emeritus of history R. Alton Lee's book, *A New Deal for South Dakota*. Lee does not just put a new gloss on familiar—if still heart-wrenching—stories of grasshopper plagues, dust storms, starving cattle, itinerant men and women riding the rails, abandoned farms, "penny auctions," and utterly overwhelmed local charity organizations. Lee dives deeper and explains how local people responded to the crisis politically. Given the recent "discovery" of white conservatism in rural America by journalists and pundits, it is high time for a scholar based in a rural state to put this political heritage in full historical context.

Although it might have been better placed in the introduction, Lee waits until the conclusion to ask the big question about South Dakota politics during the Great Depression: How could the people of South Dakota have accepted relief from the New Deal and then "[bit] the hand that fed them" by voting against state Democrats in 1936 and 1938 and