

Coxey's Crusade for Jobs: Unemployment in the Gilded Age

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and historical context. The essays in the final section, "Enduring Tales and Childhood Myths," explore a variety of literary features of the books.

As in all books of essays, some chapters are more insightful than others. Readers of this journal will be especially interested in John E. Miller's essay describing the midwestern context of Wilder's life and work. He argues that the Midwest is depicted in the following characteristics of the Little House books: "(1) the prominence of the land in its residents' thinking and the centrality of agriculture in its way of life; (2) the Homestead Act and the frontier process as integral parts of its historical experience; (3) the crucial role that small towns played in its culture; and (4) the development and nurturing of specific values as a result of those cultural experiences that helped shape residents' special identities as Midwesterners" (155). Paula Nelson does a thorough job placing Wilder's views on family, women's roles, farming, and woman suffrage into the multiple contexts of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries. Nancy Fraser examines the use of the tale of the "Bloody Benders" in some Pioneer Girl manuscripts in order to assess Wilder and Lane's relationship to the "yellow journalism" of the early twentieth century. Elizabeth Jameson considers how Wilder's troubled and poverty-ridden childhood was transformed into the happy childhood of the Little House books. Finally, William Anderson gives a fascinating brief history of the Pioneer Girl manuscript between Wilder's death in 1957 and its publication in 2014.

Overall, *Pioneer Girl Perspectives* is an excellent book. It's slightly larger than a normal hardback, and the dust jacket art is beautiful. It includes many illustrations from the original Helen Sewell editions of the Little House books as well as historical photos of Wilder, Lane, and others. Many essays fill gaps in Wilder scholarship or bring together what is already known in helpful ways. It is a worthy companion to *Pioneer Girl* on the shelves of anyone interested in the Little House books and the way that they depict the West—and the Midwest.

Coxey's Crusade for Jobs: Unemployment in the Gilded Age, by Jerry Prout. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2016. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. 152 pp. \$25.00 paperback.

Reviewer Carlos A. Schwantes is Saint Louis Mercantile Library Endowed Professor of History Emeritus, University of Missouri-St. Louis. He is the author of *Coxey's Army: An American Odyssey* (1985) and "Soldiers of Misfortune: Jack London, Kelly's Army, and the Struggle for Survival in Iowa" (*Annals of Iowa*, 1983).

Do readers need yet another book on the highly publicized 1894 march to Capitol Hill led by Jacob S. Coxey? Yes, and Jerry Prout's *Coxey's Crusade for Jobs* is a worthy addition to the substantial body of literature already extant on the topic — by my count, five books (counting this one) published since Henry Vincent's official history appeared contemporaneously while the marchers were still 40 miles from their goal. For all that has been written about "Coxey's Army," the term most often used by its observers, Prout explores in depth a number of topics that have been ignored or given very slight attention by previous writers on the topic, such as how African Americans came to view the march in highly positive terms because it drew no "color line" in terms of its membership or its stated goals.

Prout, as the title of this book suggests, portrays the Coxey phenomenon as a crusade for jobs. It was that, of course, but it was so much more. For Coxey himself, the main purpose was to drum up support for his crusade to improve the awful condition of American roads and make them usable by the rapidly growing legions of bicyclists. (The first American automobiles made their sputtering appearance in Massachusetts and Indiana only months before the 400-mile march from Coxey's hometown of Massillon, Ohio, to Washington commenced on March 25, 1894, a blustery Easter Sunday.) Prout's account is exceptionally thorough in its narration of the march's gestation in Chicago in 1893 and the weeks of preparation in Massillon that took place before the unprecedented "petition in boots" took its first steps toward Capitol Hill.

At some level, the Coxey phenomenon was pure entertainment, a dramatic national soap opera with a new episode unfolding each day on the front page of newspapers across the United States. In fact, it became the biggest news story since the disputed election of 1876. Prout's account of how that happened is excellent and is perhaps his most important contribution. He introduces readers to the cadre of newspaper reporters "embedded" in the ranks of the Coxey marchers — none of those more important in Prout's account than Ray Stannard Baker and Robert Peet Skinner. Baker (of the *Chicago Record*) was an energetic 24-year-old not long out of the University of Michigan who had never before reported on news outside Chicago. Skinner, the publisher and editor of the *Massillon Evening Independent*, wrote the initial accounts of the Coxey phenomenon unfolding almost literally on his doorstep that soon became the talk of the nation. This portion of Prout's book is especially fascinating not only in its description of newspaper coverage of Coxey's crusade but also because it serves to explore the evolving world of journalism in the 1890s. Prout notes, too, how young Jack London marched with a troop of Coxeyites across Iowa and was thus able to

hone his writing skills in terms of the working-class subject matter he later used in his novels.

Prout brings to his topic the unusual perspective of a corporate executive: he was from 2000 until 2013 the vice-president of government and public affairs for FMC, the Fortune 500 Corporation he joined in 1979. However, when *Coxey's Crusade for Jobs* was published in 2016 the author was visiting professor of political science at Marquette University. He does not reveal how or why he became interested enough in the Coxey phenomenon during his time as a business executive to write a book about it, yet Prout clearly has produced a highly informative and entirely satisfying study of the contribution of Coxey's "Industrial Army" to the history of American protest.

By the way, the author includes 24 pages of highly informative chapter notes; however, they appear densely compressed by type so small that my aging eyes needed a magnifying glass to study them. Yet it would be a mistake for serious readers to ignore them: the notes contain valuable additional details on the Coxey phenomenon and its context in Gilded Age America.

Finding Bix: The Life and Afterlife of a Jazz Legend, by Brendan Wolfe. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2017. ix, 235 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$24.95 paperback.

Reviewer C. A. Norling is a graduate student in musicology at the University of Iowa.

Simultaneously pitied and idolized, jazz cornetist Bix Beiderbecke acquired an increasingly discordant legend after his premature death in the summer of 1931. The 28-year-old Davenport native, a noted alcoholic, was likely at the peak of his career when he succumbed to sudden and still highly debated causes. Despite having worked for both Jean Goldkette and the presumed "King of Jazz," Paul Whiteman, Beiderbecke was scarcely a public figure in his own time. The ensuing decades, however, saw heightened admiration for and musical imitation of his recorded solos, bringing about a decidedly cult-like "Bixophilia."

More than a biographical profile of a famous musician, Brendan Wolfe's *Finding Bix* chronicles the author's navigation through a subject fraught with misinformation and polarizing opinions. Including topics of discography, bibliography, myth-making, and musical canonization, Wolfe presents a synthesized reinterpretation of what he calls the "Great Bix Myth" (11). He also updates the Beiderbecke discourse with new interviews and accounts from internet forums. Although not an ideal source for historians and music scholars—Wolfe himself is "not