

The Crusade for Forgotten Souls: Reforming Minnesota's Mental Institutions, 1946-1954

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The diocese's urban centers of Des Moines and Council Bluffs are well treated, as are rural areas, including the Catholic enclave of Shelby County and the challenges of Catholic ministry in Methodist-dominated, Ku Klux Klan-ridden southern counties (such as Wayne) in the 1920s. Avella offers superb attention to the significant roles played by women religious—women who were members of Catholic religious orders—in the history of Catholicism in the region. Avella also notes the important role of ethnic Catholicism in southwest Iowa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including ministry to Irish, German, and Italian Catholics into the 1910s and the recruitment of clergy from Ireland into the 1930s, but his analysis of ethnicity feels thinner here than in his magisterial history of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, *In the Richness of the Earth* (2002). Certainly, however, transnational ethnic Catholicism played a lesser role in southwest Iowa than it did in Wisconsin or even in eastern Iowa.

In his epilogue, Avella surveys recent shifts in the religious landscape in Iowa and in the United States and crucially notes the challenge posed by “the legacy of clerical sexual abuse. . . . How earlier bishops received these painful revelations and what they did they with them was not available in the archival sources at present. The pain suffered by the victims of this abuse and the early ethic of official silence and disbelief are a blot on the history of Des Moines Catholicism as they are of the universal church today” (361–62). This is a vital acknowledgment and one manifestation of Avella's thoughtful approach in this highly effective analytical history of the Catholic church in southwest Iowa.

The Crusade for Forgotten Souls: Reforming Minnesota's Mental Institutions, 1946–1954, by Susan Bartlett Foote. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018. xxii, 304 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$22.95 paperback.

Reviewer Jane Simonsen is professor of history and gender studies at Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. She is the author of “‘This Large Household’: Architecture and Civic Identity at the Iowa Hospital for the Insane” (*Annals of Iowa*, 2010).

While states currently wrestle with questions about the availability and adequacy of mental health care, *The Crusade for Forgotten Souls* recalls the intricacies of garnering support for an ever present but often invisible group. The movement to reform Minnesota state institutions for the care of those with mental illnesses originated within the institutions themselves, was galvanized by support from reform-minded Unitarians, and ultimately gained the support of the governor, only to founder amid shifting political currents. Many histories of mental health spotlight

individual institutions or trace national trends; this state-level study combines attention to particular hospitals with changing political attitudes toward mental health, anchoring them to a cast of fleshed-out characters.

The focus is Minnesota at midcentury, but the book begins with the nineteenth-century origins of Norwegian American mental health worker Engla Schey. Schey's father was a freethinking immigrant farmer whose iconoclasm and ultimate mental collapse formed the bedrock of his daughter's activism. Schey was drawn to social services work, ultimately becoming an aide at the Anoka State Hospital in 1939. Witnessing dehumanizing treatment of patients, Schey raised her concerns with the Minnesota Unitarian Conference (MUC) at a moment when hospital conditions were gaining national attention, in part due to conscientious objectors assigned to mental institutions. Supported by pastor Arthur Foote and MUC committee member Genevieve Steefel, Schey eventually gained the ear of newly elected Republican Governor Luther Youngdahl. By 1950, a coalition of reform groups sought to influence the governor's council to enact sweeping policy changes that would train hospital staff, create new programming for patients, and build a comprehensive plan for the ongoing care of Minnesotans. By the early 1950s, however, fiscal conservatives' unwillingness to approve appropriations, combined with Youngdahl's departure to serve as a federal judge, ended the movement's vigorous march.

Minnesotans' activism on behalf of patients was interwoven with state and national politics. Youngdahl was chosen to run by the former governor, Harold Stassen, who sought to uphold a "New Republican Liberalism" that balanced increased support for social services with anti-isolationism (114). Mental health reform, Foote makes clear, rises and falls with the political tides. Yet meticulous research into the lives of Schey, Foote, and Steefel—among other compelling characters in this drama—positions the experiences and determination of individual activists as the engines behind such movements. Drawing on sources such as Schey's diary, Arthur Foote's letters, and interviews with activists and their descendants, Foote shows coalition-builders using their voices to illuminate conditions at hospitals. Indeed, Foote's research began with her discovery of her former father-in-law Arthur Foote's papers; she also tracked down boxes of Schey's letters and journals, still in the possession of a niece. As a result, Schey, a would-be writer and low-ranking hospital aide, emerges as a fascinating figure in this movement.

Compellingly written, the book nonetheless sometimes sacrifices historical specificity for narrative style, as dates and the particulars of perspective may be lost in evidence drawn from letters, oral histories, diary entries, and recollections created at different times. A complex

web of interconnected organizations, agencies, councils, and politicians is balanced by attention to individual actors, and Foote also gives voice and life to some of the patients themselves via Schey's recollections. The book suggests a need for other such state-level studies, particularly those that focus on the latter half of the twentieth century. Iowa also created a series of state institutions for the care of mentally ill patients through the latter half of the nineteenth century; as in Minnesota, the twentieth century brought critiques of conditions at these institutions to public attention even as treatment shifted from physical to pharmaceutical methods.

Foote provides a valuable history of grassroots organizing and a unique focus on a religious institution's progressive political action. One lesson of this crusade is that social movements can fall prey to political and economic shifts; decades after these events, "the fundamental right to comprehensive mental health care in the United States still has not been achieved" (241). Nevertheless, the strategic alliances between individuals, churches, and mental health organizations provide a blueprint for enacting social change that has, Foote points out, created the momentum that would eventually result in organizations such as the National Alliance on Mental Illness, state-level mental health initiatives, and mental health coverage in the 2010 Affordable Care Act. In an era of decidedly divisive politics, the vision of coalitions that amplify individual voices to the level of policy change is compelling indeed.

Magic Bean: The Rise of Soy in America, by Matthew Roth. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2018. xi, 356 pp. Tables, graphs, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$45.00 hardcover, \$24.95 paperback.

Reviewer Rachel Steely is a Ph.D. candidate in history at Harvard University. She is working on a dissertation that maps the emergence and diffusion of soy as a global commodity.

During its history as an American crop, the soybean has often been a disappointment. Promoters advocated soybean cultivation for agricultural improvement schemes that were not widely implemented; innovators misjudged soy as a viable meat, coffee, and milk substitute; and social reformers used soy as a key nutritional substrate in utopian communities that ultimately fell apart. Despite numerous setbacks, soybean plants now occupy more acres of American farmland than any other crop. Matthew Roth's *Magic Bean: The Rise of Soy in America* is an informative account of the introduction and spread of the soybean in the United States that explains how one of twentieth-century American agriculture's most persistent failures was also one of its greatest successes.