

Magic Bean: The Rise of Soy in America

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ISSN 0003-4827

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Recommended Citation

Steely, Rachel. "Magic Bean: The Rise of Soy in America." *The Annals of Iowa* 78 (2019), 109-111.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.12583>

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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.

The narrative unfolds across nine chronological chapters that span the twentieth century, the period during which soy expanded from an obscure crop used primarily for animal fodder into a commodity present in a dizzying array of products. Throughout, Roth foregrounds individuals, uncovering stories of immigrants, government agents, businessmen, and social visionaries who experimented with soybean plants, processing, and utilization. The first chapter follows people who moved soybean cultivars and foods from East Asia to the United States. It highlights the ingenuity of immigrants to the American West who retained soy as part of traditional foodways, the encounters of Seventh-day Adventist missionaries with soyfoods overseas, and the labor of U.S. Department of Agriculture agronomists like Frank Meyer, Charles Piper, and William Morse. Subsequent chapters examine the slow, uneven spread of the soybean into American fields, factories, and foods. Early twentieth-century farm extension agents distributed seeds and information to farmers. The world wars stimulated interest in soy as a high-protein foodstuff and as a substitute for other fats and oils unavailable as a result of disruptions to wartime supply chains. George Washington Carver, Henry Ford, and proponents of the chemurgical movement sought in soy a solution to the farm problem and a way to forge new links between agriculture and industry.

As Roth notes, many such experiments failed to take root. Only with the takeoff of industrial meat production following World War II did soy become entrenched as a dominant agricultural commodity. This period saw what was arguably the most dramatic alteration that America made to the soybean: the installation of soy at the foundation of a new food system, both as a protein source in livestock feed and as an additive in an ever expanding cornucopia of processed foods. Yet these subjects receive relatively sparse treatment in later chapters of the book, which instead feature postwar proponents of soy milk, tofu, and texturized vegetable protein, and discuss the cultural tastes that stymied broader adoption of these goods by American consumers. The book's content does not match Roth's stated objective: to examine how "America transformed the soybean." The book consists, instead, of an interesting but loosely linked set of vignettes that tend to bird-dog experiments with soy foods that did not catch on, in lieu of a deeper excavation of the most significant changes worked on, and through, the soybean.

Another missed opportunity to demonstrate soy's historical significance lies in the book's lack of engagement with existing historical scholarship. Fresh perspectives could be found by examining familiar topics through the lens of soy, including the historical transformation of southern and midwestern agriculture, changes to food production

methods and consumer habits, and the place of such phenomena within global patterns of trade and consumption. Some connections are suggested, but few receive sustained analysis, leaving readers with an impression of American soy as a quirky sideshow, an impression antithetical to soy's pervasive reach across the countryside, into diets, and around the world.

Magic Bean succeeds on several levels. Most importantly, Roth pulls soy from obscurity and places it center stage. Historians have paid soy strikingly little heed, and this study does critical work in rectifying that oversight. To do so, Roth has admirably woven many different threads into a single piece, making space for discussion of technological innovations, environmental concerns, commodity price fluctuations, federal and state soy promotional schemes, debates about GMOs and the nutritional value of soy, and biographical sketches of business leaders. Readers will enjoy Roth's compelling presentation of his actors and the consistent inclusion of the variegated perspectives and hopes they brought to their work with soy. While consistent with Roth's emphasis on consumption, among the voices that are less perceptible in *Magic Bean* are those of the farmers who took up soybean cultivation; there are surely important insights, experiences, and contributions to be found in their stories as well. *Magic Bean* is an enjoyable read, and anyone interested in the cultures, science, and economics of American foodways will find much of interest between its covers.

Walking Home Ground: In the Footsteps of Muir, Leopold, and Derleth, by Robert Root. Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2017. xv, 250 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, index. \$22.95 hardcover and paperback.

Reviewer Thomas K. Dean is senior presidential writer/editor and adjunct assistant professor at the University of Iowa. His extensive writings about the importance of place include *Under a Midland Sky* (2008).

A central question of what is sometimes called "place studies" is how one becomes as deeply connected to place as possible. Robert Root proposes that physical connection is essential: thus his project of "walking home ground" as he seeks to become a more intentional resident of the Wisconsin landscape he has moved to. Root does not merely hike the trails of his local environment, however. He chooses to make a deeper connection by retracing the footsteps of three essential writers of this land—John Muir, Aldo Leopold, and August Derleth—literally walking the same ground those figures trod and opening his informed