

Jack London on the Road: the Tramp Diary and Other Hobo Writings

ISSN 0003-4827

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Recommended Citation

"Jack London on the Road: the Tramp Diary and Other Hobo Writings." *The Annals of Iowa* 50 (1989), 315-315.

Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.9411>

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Jack London on the Road: The Tramp Diary and Other Hobo Writings, edited by Richard W. Etulain. 1979. Reprint. Logan: Utah State University Press, 1987. xi, 209 pp. Illustrations, notes. \$12.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY CARLOS A. SCHWANTES, UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO

Jack London was fascinated by the life of the transient, and time and again he returned to the subject in his writings. He was, in fact, the first major American writer to deal with hoboes. During a tramp half-way across the continent with a contingent of Coxey's Army in 1894, he gained his most important firsthand insights into life on the road; yet, as Richard Etulain observes, this facet of the author's life went largely unnoticed by biographers and critics, despite London's repeated claims that the experience was a turning point in his life.

Etulain has done an outstanding job of assembling all that London wrote about transient life, except for *The Road* (1907), a book already republished. The heart of *Jack London on the Road* is probably his diary account of a month-long odyssey across Iowa in the spring of 1894. Whether London actually became a formal member of Kelley's contingent of Coxeyites is not clear, but he accompanied it as far as Keokuk, where tiring of the "army's" discipline and hardship he set out on his own. London ultimately landed in the Erie County (NY) Penitentiary, where he served a thirty-day term for vagrancy.

Tramping as a way of life was for many years an important aspect of the natural-resource-based economy of the American West. The alternating rhythms of work and unemployment in timber, mining, agriculture, and construction fostered the creation of a veritable army of itinerant workers. London sought to capture the essence of their life on the road, to provide a kind of "how-to" guide to their subculture and its argot. Etulain's introductory remarks, which take the form of an extended essay on London and bibliographical notes on hobo literature, represent an excellent starting point for any reader interested in itinerant workers.

The Speeches and Writings of Mother Jones, edited by Edward M. Steel. Pittsburgh Series in Labor History. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1988. xvii, 331 pp. Biographical notes, index. \$32.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY ALLAN KENT POWELL, UTAH STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Readers of the *Annals of Iowa* may recall my review of *The Correspondence of Mother Jones* published in the Summer/Fall 1986 issue. *The Speeches and Writings of Mother Jones* is a companion volume to that

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