

Choosing Truman: the Democratic Convention of 1944

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climate of the time rather than proving it to potentially skeptical readers.

The book is most successful in describing the development of the study of child development and the Iowa Station's role in that field, least successful in connecting this academic history to the broader culture of the time.

Choosing Truman: The Democratic Convention of 1944, by Robert H. Ferrell. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1994. xiii, 137 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. \$24.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY RICHARD S. KIRKENDALL, UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

This impressively researched, well-written, and forcefully argued book concentrates on the most important decision made by the Democratic Party in 1944. In doing so, it deals with the major turning point in the career of a prominent Iowan, Henry A. Wallace. The decision concerned the selection of the vice-presidential candidate. What made it so important is that the person chosen soon became president—and at a crucial time.

Up to this point of decision, Wallace had enjoyed one success after another. After editing *Wallaces' Farmer* and founding what became the nation's leading seed corn company, he served two terms as secretary of agriculture and one as vice-president. By 1944, many people regarded him as the person who should succeed Franklin Roosevelt. But the Democrats chose Truman for the vice-presidency that year. He became president in 1945, fired Wallace from the cabinet in 1946, and defeated him for the presidency two years later. Soon after that staggering defeat, the Iowa native, then living in New York, dropped out of politics.

Why did Wallace's life take this turn in 1944? Robert Ferrell argues that the turn was engineered by party leaders, most notably Robert Hannegan, the chair of the Democratic National Committee, and Edwin Pauley, the committee's treasurer. They waged a successful campaign to persuade Roosevelt that Wallace would hurt the ticket and then to convince convention delegates that Roosevelt believed this and thus wanted Truman. Their motive was to defeat Wallace, whom they considered strange, a poor politician, too liberal, and unfit to succeed the sick Roosevelt in the White House. They looked at several alternatives before settling on Truman.

Although Ferrell's account significantly advances our understanding of the 1944 decision, several features seem unsatisfactory.

Focusing on the convention and a short period before that event, Ferrell does not probe Roosevelt's move away from Wallace. More may have been involved than the leaders' pressure. Even before it began, FDR may have been disappointed with Wallace because of the surfacing of the "Guru letters," the failure to carry Iowa in 1940, and the public row with Jesse Jones in 1943. In addition, the author, focusing on political elites, does not analyze the leaders' success with the delegates. Some must have had ideas and interests of their own that made them more than followers of the leaders. In fact, Democrats that year were sharply divided on issues such as civil rights. Somehow, Truman, whom Ferrell sees as eager to become president, functioned more effectively in that situation than his leading rivals, Wallace and James Byrnes.

Hannegan, Pauley, and their associates, even more than Truman, are the heroes of Ferrell's story. In his view, they served the country well by choosing a well-qualified person for the presidency. Furthermore, they worked in accord with an admirable code—the code of political bosses—that placed a high value on telling the truth, a trait that distinguished them from Roosevelt.

But did these bosses tell FDR the whole truth? They attempted to conceal Wallace's popularity from the president, even working to keep the vice-president's champions away from the oval office. Perhaps this deception, rather than personality defects, explains the president's wavering after Wallace had a chance to inform him of pollsters' findings about voter appraisals of vice-presidential possibilities. And perhaps those appraisals and the Iowan's ideas justified his battle for renomination. He surely believed they made him the person who should succeed Roosevelt.

Women Remember the War, 1941–1945, edited by Michael E. Stevens. Voices of the Wisconsin Past Series. Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1993. x, 157 pp. Illustrations, index. \$7.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY SUSAN M. HARTMANN, OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Historians using oral history to reconstruct women's experiences during World War II have thus far tended to concentrate on a particular sphere of activity, such as military service, the shipbuilding industry, or aircraft production. *Women Remember the War*, the first published oral history project to focus on a single state, provides a broad sampling of how the war shaped many elements of women's lives.

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