

---

## BOOK NOTES

---

*Images of America: Lawrence.* By Virgil W. Dean. (Charleston, SC.: Arcadia Publishing, 2015, 128 pages, paper \$21.99.)

Lawrence, Kansas, considered by many in the state as the liberal island in a political sea of red Republicanism, is the subject of Virgil Dean's addition to Arcadia Press's growing compilation of Kansas cities and places. Arcadia is best known for its standardized, illustrated histories of places throughout the nation. Dean's work measures up to the best offerings of this company with his survey of Lawrence from the time of its founding in the summer of 1854 to the present. Dean's collection of illustrations, with their concise and informative captions, chronicles the rich history of this city with its flagship institution, the University of Kansas. Dean provides more than the development of the economics and politics in the city by including a thorough depiction of the role of women and minorities. Dean's theme of "contested space" nicely ties together over 150 years of Lawrence history. Anyone interested in a thoughtful, well-illustrated history of Lawrence will find Dean's work a delight

*Historical Dictionary of the American Frontier.* By Jay H. Buckley and Brenden W. Rensink. (Lanham, MD.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015, xxiv + 331 pages, cloth \$100.00.)

Like the other volumes in the Historical Dictionaries of U.S. Politics and Political Eras series, *Historical Dictionary of the American Frontier* includes a rather extensive chronology, 986 to 1906, an introduction that sets out the volume's scope and methodology, and a lengthy bibliography. The bulk of the volume, however (almost two hundred pages), is made up of alphabetical entries from Aguayo to Wood, which together explore, according to the authors, "various peoples, industries, nations, events and themes related to the early Euro-American discovery, exploration, and development of various frontiers in North America. . . . Rather than viewing the frontier as an Anglo-American and, later, U.S.-oriented process that rolled over an empty landscape," it "considers multiple frontiers of European exploration and development that advanced and retreated over indigenous landscapes" (p. 1).

*Bluebird.* By Lindsey Yankey. (Vancouver, BC.: Simply Read Books, 2014, 32 pages, cloth \$17.95.)

*Bluebird*, a 2014 Kansas Notable Book, is a whimsically illustrated children's book that tells the story of a little bluebird in search of her missing friend, Wind. Bluebird has never flown without her friend before, and she explores the park and surrounding cityscape (could it be the Country Club Plaza?), looking eagerly for Wind. Finally, after hours of hunting, Bluebird realizes she has flown solo to the top of the tallest building all on her own. With oversized pages and illustrations that include line drawings, collage, and pattern play, young readers are encouraged to turn the book sideways to view all the imaginative details of the landscape Bluebird explores. At the end of the book, Bluebird and Wind are reunited, and the two of them fly off together over the city.

*My Secret Wars of 1984.* By Dennis Etzel Jr. (Buffalo, NY: BlazeVOX, 2015, 87 pages, paper \$16.00.)

In his introduction to *My Secret Wars of 1984*, Joseph Harrington states, "Orwell turned 1984 into one of those iconic years." While Orwell chose the year at random, the early 1980s did witness numerous important historical events. Native Kansan and

Washburn University lecturer Dennis Etzel Jr. reinterprets this critical period through a series of poems that successfully layer local and national events upon those of the author's own life. Etzel's technique may initially confuse unsuspecting readers, as he employs many different narrative modes, including formal language, Newspeak, and dialogue balloons from comics—to name a few—to convey thoughts on Ronald Reagan, the coming-out of his mother, pop culture, and AIDS awareness. Despite this, however, this collection is a fascinating and compelling work.

*NEQUA or the Problem of the Ages*, 3rd ed. By Jack Adams. (Kansas City, MO.: Green Snake Press, 2014, xiv + 349 pages, paper \$24.95.)

*NEQUA*, one of the first utopian, hollow-earth, science fiction, feminist novels, began life serialized in the Topeka newspaper *Equity*, a paper dedicated to the "discussion of fundamental economics and the higher ethics of business" (p. iii). It appeared in book form in 1900. In his Preface to this new third edition, Mark O. J. Esping asserts that *NEQUA*'s original existence provides testimony "to the attempts in Kansas and throughout the Midwest to find methods of refining the democracy and economics of the day to better protect the average person" (p. iii). Jack Adams, the narrator and pseudonymous author, is really Cassie Van Ness, masquerading as a man. She is in search of her lost love, Captain Ganoa. Adams eventually accompanies Ganoa (though he does not recognize her until the last pages of the novel) to the inside of the earth, where the Altrurian civilization lives. In Altruria, there is equality of the sexes, communal living, and universal education. After spending some time with the Altrurians, Adams flies an airplane back to the outside world, a copy of the *NEQUA* manuscript on board. Esping has also attempted here to provide more information about the book's authors, A. O. Grigsby and Mary P. Lowe, than was previously known.

*Wyoming Grasslands.* By Frank H. Goodyear Jr. and Charles R. Preston, with photographs by Michael P. Berman and William S. Sutton. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015, 231 pages, hardcover \$27.95.)

*Wyoming Grasslands* is a pictorial survey of the prairie in Wyoming, with black-and-white and color photographs taken over the course of 2012–2014. A foreword by Dan Flores and a pair of essays accompany the landscape photographs. The first essay, by biologist Charles R. Preston, offers an environmental history of the Wyoming grasslands, with a discussion of how the grasslands, particularly their flora and fauna, have been affected by humankind and the passage of time. The other essay, by Frank H. Goodyear Jr., examines how the Wyoming Grasslands Photographic Project was initiated and how the Wyoming prairie has generally been depicted in historical writings. Goodyear's essay is particularly valuable for students of photography, as he goes into some detail about how the photographers chose their shots and what equipment they used. The photographs themselves, of course, are the real highlight of the book, encompassing most of its 231 pages. Some of the photographs are picturesque, others powerful, while still others emphasize the desolation and emptiness of the prairie. Environmental historians—especially regional specialists—will benefit the most from the book, but *Wyoming Grasslands* is also accessible to a broader, more popular audience and would make a wonderful addition to any coffee table.