

Gilbert C. Fite. *Cotton Fields No More: Southern Agriculture 1865-1980*. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984) xiii, 273 pp., \$28.00, \$10.00 paper.

Cotton Fields No More... should be required reading for all individuals associated with the development of agricultural policies in the U.S. Congress, because their perceptions of farming are probably influenced to a large degree by the ideology of Jeffersonian agrarianism. Although Fite's purpose is to analyze commercial agricultural development in the eleven former Confederate States since the end of the Civil War (stretching from Virginia to Texas), he successfully captures the essence of contemporary agricultural problems throughout the United States: Farming as a way of life died after World War II and agribusiness was the successor, but too many people do not understand the new reality.

Fite's portrait of agriculture in the South is comprehensive. His balanced account shows how black and white society was retarded: (1) lack of capital for expansion, i.e., "The living standard of so many farmers in the South was not a relative matter but one of absolute poverty" (34); (2) poor diets, e.g., "A study in four rural counties in South Carolina in the 1920s found that 41 percent of the white children from one to five years old, and 71 percent of the blacks, existed on deficient diets" (38); (3) religion and church membership but almost no formal secular education; and (4) racism as the keystone for maintaining a segregated existence, i.e., "Keeping the black 'in his place' was not only a goal in plantation areas, where blacks outnumbered whites, but in the larger farm society as well" (46). He also provides illustrations of what the situation was for southern farm women: "They worked longer and harder than other members of the family and enjoyed the least recreation and social life" (45).

Fite notes how southern rural society remained relatively static between the 1880s and 1940, and how the combination of science and technology in agriculture destroyed the old patterns of farm life (209). Mechanization and grass were the two developments that destroyed the old-fashioned sharecropping system and drove most small southern farmers out of farming as a fulltime occupation. Blacks were affected more than whites because a larger percentage of black farmers had been on small acreages (208). *Thousands of southern farm families were unable to make the transition to either industrial employment or profitable farming*. Where did they go and what are they doing?

Cotton Fields No More... is not easy to read. The book is worthy of study, nonetheless. Not only are statistics used profusely but they are presented in such a manner that questions arise about all of the movies "Hollywood" produced romanticizing the "Old South." A creative writer can find no fewer than eighty good leads for producing well-rounded

accounts about an “Old South” which remain veiled in a literary context. Consequently, Fite’s study has the power to become a classic.

— Charles C. Irby
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David M. Gradwohl and Nancy M. Osborn. *Exploring Buried Buxton*. (Ames: Iowa State University Press) xvi, 207 pp., \$19.95.

Readers of *Explorations In Sights and Sounds* are in for a welcome surprise, especially if they have an occasion to wade through a professional monograph outside their own area of interest or expertise. *Exploring Buried Buxton* is a rigorous, specialized archaeological monograph that should be read by all who wish to learn of ethnic relations in the United States. It is also readable, comprehensive, interesting, and important. Moreover, *Exploring Buried Buxton* is significant as the record of a model academic process. As a result of the activities centering on Buxton, Iowa, over the past few years, professors have published, students have learned, the non-academic community has been involved in its past, grant monies have been well spent, and the nation has gained precious insight into a forgotten chapter of its multi-ethnic past. All of this is done in an understated style, in a very well-organized format, and, yes, even with humor.

Buxton may be buried now, but for twenty-five years it was a vigorous planned community established for mining Iowa coal. Buxton is remarkable mainly for its deserved reputation as a place where people of many ethnic backgrounds lived in relative peace and harmony during a time when racism was particularly virulent. Buxton faded away when the economics of the coal industry changed. Farming activities have obliterated most casually visible traces of the townsite that was home to nearly six thousand people at its peak.

When archaeologists were introduced to Buxton in 1980 by a lay historian whose mother had been born and reared there, cattle, pastures, cultivated fields, and scattered farmsteads greeted them. That summer an interdisciplinary team of archaeologists, sociologists, and historians from Iowa State University began work. They used oral histories of former Buxton residents and their descendents, archival materials from many sources, and archaeological techniques to piece together the story of Buxton. They came to reconstruct its history, to give its descendents an opportunity to learn about their cultural heritage, and