

Erickson's book demonstrates the value of practitioner memoirs as sources for agricultural history and suggests how much we still need comparative studies of ranch communities navigating similar pressures across the American West.

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The Black Woods: Pursuing Racial Justice on the Adirondack Frontier. By Amy Godine. Cornell University Press, 2025. 510 pp., \$24.95, paperback, ISBN 9781501784972.

In *The Black Woods: Pursuing Racial Justice on the Adirondack Frontier*, Amy Godine tracks the history and legacy of antebellum Black settlement efforts in New York's North Woods. In three sections, the author examines the origins of the abolitionist ideas of Gerrit Smith, the realities of settlement and life for Black New Yorkers in the Adirondacks, and its legacy through the remainder of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The first section follows the history of Gerrit Smith, a radical abolitionist and landlord who distributed land claims to Black New Yorkers in an effort to subvert the state's racist voting laws. Even as he drew up the plans, Smith met with criticism from activists, Black New Yorkers, and reformers who saw racist paternalism, naivete, or radical foolishness in the proposal. As Godine notes, Smith's vision failed to account for the realities of many Black New Yorkers who hesitated at the abolitionist's grand gesture. In fact, Godine's choice to shift the focus from Smith to the land agents tasked with identifying, recruiting, and pitching Smith's vision reveals why the abolitionist struggled to attract large numbers of future Adirondackers. For many Black New Yorkers weighing their options, Smith's strict rules for settlement, the lack of social supports in the rural North, competing abolitionist ventures, and unfamiliar environments all served as reasons to decline the opportunity. Smith had his ideas for proposing a massive redistribution of land in the Adirondacks but, as Godine effectively reminds us, Black New Yorkers had their own reasons for accepting or declining the deeds.

In the second section of *The Black Woods*, Godine tracks the experiences of grantees in the Adirondacks, revealing a region that never quite achieved Smith's aspirations. As he attempted to scatter Black grantees around the Adirondacks, the settlers had their own ideas about building community. They farmed, to be sure, but not necessarily as their benefactor imagined.

Opposing the isolation of Smith's yeoman agrarianism, many Black Adirondackers traded or sold plots, established new towns, and built community amid white settlers whose responses to the newcomers varied. Though grantees were sometimes met with hostility and scammers, they often found new political coalitions and acts of racial solidarity. Those who arrived in the Adirondacks made the region their own, adapting it to their needs. As Godine demonstrates, "The grantees left no aspect of Smith's vision for his gift lands unedited, unchanged" (147).

The third section tracks the mixed legacy of Black settlement and abolition in the Adirondacks. In the decades after the Civil War, the history of the Black settlers seemed to be fading from collective memory. Emancipation and Reconstruction transformed the entirety of social life in the United States, and with fragile legal backing, African Americans who ventured to the Adirondacks could now move with a greater freedom than had been the case a few years prior. Some Black pioneers left and sought opportunities elsewhere. Others sold land and used the funds to begin new ventures. The population of Black Adirondackers decreased over the remainder of the nineteenth century. At this time, the broader regional economy began to shift. Tourists flocked to the booming resort industry, fundamentally shaping the entire landscape. Remaining white Adirondackers either forgot their Black neighbors or chose to replace that radical history with the image of John Brown. His martyrdom became a symbol of the Adirondacks—but Brown's story was not the same as Smith's, and it was certainly not an embrace of the Black Adirondackers who worked to make this landscape home. Facing local prejudices and the contemporary politics of the twentieth century, much of the "Black agrarian initiative" was, Godine argues, "reduced to anecdotal marginalia" (7).

Godine is a resident of the Adirondacks, and her familiarity with and care for the region are present throughout the book. Her work draws a through line from idealism to reality in the hopes it can lead to further reckoning. This history is important to tell, she argues, not only to recover the voices of those who pursued racial justice in the Adirondacks but also so those in the Adirondacks today might aspire to more. The Adirondacks were both "the staging ground of an unprecedented voting rights initiative" and the current "home of a cherished abolitionist shrine," she reminds readers. "But it is also a stronghold of an Anglocentric narrative of purity and inviolability" (11). In short, it is a land of contradictions. Godine's work makes that abundantly clear. Thus, *The Black Woods* promises to be an essential history of Gerrit Smith's nineteenth-century venture, those who sought racial justice

and economic opportunity in the North Woods, and the mixed legacy of heritage-making—and forgetting—in the Adirondacks.

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Six Women Who Shaped What Americans Eat: Food Choice in an Age of Abundance. By Michelle Mart. University of Alabama Press, 2025. 314 pp., \$34.95, paperback, ISBN 9780817362140.

Six Women Who Shaped What Americans Eat examines the shifting history of twentieth-century American food and agriculture through the lives of six influential food reformers and advocates: Hazel Stiebeling, Poppy Cannon, Julia Child, Frances Moore Lappé, Marion Nestle, and Alice Waters. The book's structure is its smartest and most distinctive feature. Mart's profiled figures range widely but are not arbitrary selections. The women featured in the first half of the book (Stiebeling, Cannon, and Child) largely endorsed many of the industrial transformations of the food and agricultural system; those featured in the second half (Lappé, Nestle, and Waters) emerged as significant critics of these developments. The wide-ranging juxtaposition is more than a sum of its parts, for each individual profile offers perspective on the others. For example, Alice Waters's insistence on seasonality of food appears all the more striking when one understands how vociferously Poppy Cannon celebrated the seasonlessness of canned food just decades earlier. As the book narrates each woman's accomplishments, it also illustrates the shifting terrain of popular attitudes and understandings of food and agricultural systems across the twentieth century.

Mart's narrative demonstrates an astute and comprehensive understanding of secondary literature on food and agriculture. Mart ably interprets the published writing of each of the research subjects, as well as documents from archival collections for four of the six women. The book also draws from additional unpublished documents authored by other scholars and policymakers related to food, agriculture, and nutrition. The author excels by discussing each research subject's works relative to others from the same period. Her analysis of Julia Child's *Mastering the Art of French Cuisine*, for instance, becomes all the more instructive when she discusses the book in relation to other food publications of its era, such as *Gourmet* magazine, *The Joy of Cooking*, *Better Homes and Gardens New Cook Book*, *Betty Crocker's Picture Cookbook*, and *The Fannie Farmer Cookbook*. As someone who regularly asks students to use cookbooks as historical documents in my teaching, I look forward to sharing these excerpts as exemplars.