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Review of Prevailing Over Time: Ethnic Adjustment on the Kansas Prairies, 1875-1925.

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Prevailing Over Time: Ethnic Adjustment on the Kansas Prairies, 1875-1925. By D. Aidan McQuillan. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990. Figures, tables, preface, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. xix + 292 pp. \$37.50.

Prevailing Over Time is an exploration of the development of Swedish, Russian Mennonite, and French Canadian farming communities in central Kansas in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. McQuillan examines the immigrants' adoption of American social practices and the adjustment of ethnic and native-born settlers to farming in an area of unpredictable rainfall.

Swedes seemed the most individualistic and therefore the most likely candidates for assimilation. Mennonites had practiced the most innovative, commercialized farming under environmental conditions similar to those they would experience in Kansas, but they also maintained strong, patriarchal families and group coherence. French Canadians were bound to extended families and to the Roman Catholic Church. Both the Swedes and the French Ca-

nadians immigrated first to Illinois, where they adopted Corn-Belt farming practices, and were consequently slower than the Mennonites to adjust to environmental conditions in central Kansas.

In Kansas, Mennonites bought the best land at high prices from speculators. Swedes bought land from the railroad or homesteaded, securing some good and some indifferent land. French Canadians acquired the poorest land, but homesteading cut their investment costs. Mennonite settlement patterns were the most coherent; those of the French Canadians were the least. French Canadians gave the most rapid evidence of Americanization by joining the Republican Party and local fraternal lodges. Mennonites were the slowest to join any political party and to adopt English. All three immigrant groups experienced high rates of mobility. All three eventually adopted diversified farming regimes. Swedes were the most cautious, long remaining wed to Corn-Belt practices. Mennonite farming balanced risk avoidance and maximized profit. French Canadians showed, like native-born farmers, the greatest sensitivity to market demand.

McQuillan's research critiques an assimilationist model of Americanization. Both immigrant and native-born settlers made adjustments to the new environment: "the superiority of American farmers and their influence on immigrants has not been confirmed" (p. 200). To the contrary, the Mennonites, the group slowest to adopt native-born social practices, also developed the most successful farming regime, one that Americans who lived near them tended to emulate. McQuillan argues for a pluralist model of Americanization that takes into account both ethnogenesis—how immigrants developed distinctive ethnic identities—and the possibility of mutual influence between immigrant and native-born settlers. McQuillan's conclusion, however, is plausibly suggested rather than clearly demonstrated, for it does not examine in any depth relations within and among ethnic communities or between immigrant and native-born settlers or explain why Mennonites, Swedes, and French Canadians

adjusted as they did. Finally, McQuillan leaves unexplored perhaps his most striking finding: there is no necessary connection between behavior ascribed to an ethic of individualism and successful commercial farming.

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