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## Review of *Born in the Country: A History of Rural America* By David B. Danbom

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*Born in the Country: A History of Rural America.*  
By David B. Danbom. Baltimore: The Johns  
Hopkins University Press, 1995. Photographs,  
notes, suggestions for further reading, index.  
xii + 306 pp. \$42.50 cloth, \$14.95 paper.

David B. Danbom, professor of history at North Dakota State University, Fargo, is widely respected as one of the nation's leading authorities on agricultural history. His purpose in writing this book, to provide a general history of rural America combining traditional political and economic history with the new social history, he accomplishes with admirable success. *Born in the Country* will quickly become a standard text in the field.

Danbom traces the history of agriculture from the nation's beginnings, when rural Americans dominated the nation, down to a present in which farmers and people living in rural areas have become a small minority. Among the book's major strengths is the quality of its writing: the author has a rare talent for synthesizing complex trends and developments in a few succinct sentences. The result is not only a readable book, but one that deals with important questions in a thoughtful manner. Moreover, the topics covered are balanced and comprehensive. The volume begins with a discussion of rural Europe and

Pre-Columbian America, traces the history of agriculture from the Colonial period through the age of industrialization, and concludes with an analysis of agriculture and rural life at the end of the twentieth century. Consideration is given to every agricultural region in the United States. A further strength is the book's emphasis on social history. Danbom's discussion of women, minorities, rural values, and the lives of ordinary people who have worked in agriculture is both informative and engaging. Finally, the concluding chapters explaining the consequences of agriculture's modernization, especially since World War II, are cogently done.

Clearly sympathetic to farmers and agriculture, Danbom has nonetheless written a book that is both scholarly and objective. Although it presents no new or controversial thesis about the history of rural America, it succeeds in being exactly what it intended to be, an excellent synthesis of past and present scholarship relating America's rural history. The thorough notes at the end of each chapter provide an excellent bibliography. *Born in the Country* is a welcome and needed addition to the historical literature of rural America.

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