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**Review of *Bust to Boom: Documentary Photographs of Kansas, 1936-1949* Edited by Constance B. Schulz**

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*Bust to Boom: Documentary Photographs of Kansas, 1936-1949.* Edited by Constance B. Schulz. Text commentary by Donald Worster. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996. Photographs, additional reading. ix + 157 pp. \$29.95.

Despite its quiet and broad landscape, Kansas has endured a history that runs from antebellum violence, through buffalo slaughter and dust bowl despair, to wartime boom. Perhaps no time in Kansas history has seen more flux than the depression 1930s and the wartime 1940s; and doubtless no time has been better documented by able photographers. Thanks to Kansas-born Roy Stryker and the three documentary photography projects he headed during the period (for the Farm Security Administration, the Office of War Information, and Standard Oil of New Jersey), Kansans and the world have a sharper idea of what life was like in the Sunflower State during that strange time when dust storms and foreclosures began to give way to war production and bond drives.

Under Stryker's guidance nine photographers sampled the people, events, and places of Kansas between 1936 and 1949, and in *Bust to Boom* the reader is treated to 103 carefully selected and sequenced photographs, complete with original captions and negative numbers. Here are Kansas icons of the era: topsoil-buried fences, a county fair, overalled men working the soil, print-dressed women with their home canning, barefoot kids fishing, drovers, soldiers, railroad workers. Here are oil field roughnecks, street scenes, rural landscapes, grain elevators, aerial views of corn and wheat.

Of course the photographs are not representative, and the editor and commentator address that fact. *Bust to Boom* renders a small selection of images from a state of 82,000 square miles over a span of thirteen years. Readers will find no pictures of universities, of the leisure class, and few of urban places. But the images fulfill their intentions: they give readers—and viewers—some concrete idea of a past existence, some feeling for what life was

like in a world that grows more distant with each new netsite or cellphone in our own.

Donald Worster's commentary, though once in a while straying a bit far from the photographs, provides an accurate and valuable context for understanding Kansas in this era. Constance Schulz's concise text about the photographs' creation could well serve as a primer to viewing the documentary projects of the 1930s and 40s. Indeed, their presentation is so engaging that at times one wishes for more information than the useful caption material which each photograph provides: the authors might have exploited their Kansas knowledge to elaborate on what has become of the Santa Fe locomotive shops in Topeka and ditch irrigation in western Kansas.

Carefully researched and written, beautifully designed, and well printed, *Bust to Boom* takes its place among the finest in a growing list of books that have brought to us, state by state, the best work of the FSA and other documentary photography projects.

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