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Review of *How the Vote Was Won: Woman Suffrage in the Western United States, 1868-1914* By Rebecca J. Mead

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How the Vote Was Won: Woman Suffrage in the Western United States, 1868-1914. By Rebecca J. Mead. New York: New York University Press, 2004. x + 273 pp. Photographs, notes, bibliography, index. \$50.00.

Rebecca Mead has crafted a detailed history of suffrage campaigns in the western states. While her accounts are particularly rich for California, her definition of the West also includes Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. Each chapter of *How the Vote Was Won* focuses on one or a handful of states, tracing the factors Mead identifies as critical to success (or failure) of campaigns for woman suffrage. More than this, she provides vibrant descriptions of the backgrounds of state suffrage leaders, their relationships with prominent national suffrage activists, the content of state suffragists' arguments, and the tactics used to garner the support of male legislators and voters.

Repeatedly, Mead asserts that support from Populists and Progressives, and from the "farm-labor alliance," was critical for suffrage successes. And she does deliver persuasive qualitative evidence for her claim. But her conclusion may be challenged on at least three grounds. First, she provides no justification of her definition of "the West." The U.S. Census category, for example, would also include North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma. State suffrage movements failed in North Dakota and Nebraska, but won in Kansas (1912), South Dakota, and Oklahoma (both in 1918). What was the role of the "progressive-farmer-labor" alliance in these additional states?

Second, as Mead points out, New Mexico was the only western (by her definition) state in which suffragists were never successful. And yet Mead has virtually nothing to say about suffrage efforts there. Were suffragists in New Mexico unable to garner the critical support of third parties? Was the farm-labor alliance uncooperative? Beyond discussion of failed campaigns in states where women eventually won the vote, Mead might have strengthened her argument with greater attention to the sole holdout.

Finally, despite careful mining of primary and secondary sources, Mead overlooks recent social science scholarship on state woman suffrage movements. In particular, Lee Ann Banaszak's *Why Movements Succeed or Fail: Opportunity, Culture, and the Struggle for Woman Suffrage* (1996) and Susan Marshall's *Splintered Sisterhood: Gender and Class in the Campaign against Woman Suffrage* (1997) are absent. And in the February 2001 issue of *Gender & Society*, Holly McCammon and I come to conclusions about the sources of western suffrage successes that are relevant for Mead's research. In a book as richly detailed as *How the Vote Was Won*, surely there is room for a bit more interdisciplinarity.

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