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# IMMIGRATION TO THE GREAT PLAINS, 1865-1914 WAR, POLITICS, TECHNOLOGY, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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# IMMIGRATION TO THE GREAT PLAINS, 1865–1914 WAR, POLITICS, TECHNOLOGY, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

BRUCE GARVER

The advent and vast extent of immigration to the Great Plains states during the years 1865 to 1914 is perhaps best understood in light of the new international context that emerged during the 1860s in the aftermath of six large wars whose consequences included the enlargement of civil liberties, an acceleration of economic growth and technological innovation, the expansion of world markets, and the advent

Key Words: civil liberties, education, Czech Americans, German Americans, Italian Americans, railroads, religion

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of mass immigration to the United States from east-central and southern Europe.<sup>1</sup> Facilitating all of these changes was the achievement of widespread literacy through universal, free, compulsory, and state-funded elementary education in the United States, Canada, and most western and northern European countries. Moreover, the extraordinary transformation of the Great Plains from a sparsely inhabited frontier to a region of thriving cities and commercial agriculture took place in the remarkably short time of forty-nine years, during which Europe and North America enjoyed unprecedented peace and prosperity. Even as late as 1945, many Americans were aware that the entire history of the Great Plains states had occurred within the living memory of their most elderly citizens.

In this essay I discuss these and several broad, related topics in the history of the Great Plains, emphasizing continental European immigration facilitated by industrial technology. It is understood, as did Jacob Burckhardt in defining such essays, that other scholars who examine the same or similar evidence may draw somewhat different conclusions.<sup>2</sup> My perspective is primarily that of a historian of

modern Europe and of Slavic immigrants to the United States and to a lesser extent that of an American who has resided in Nebraska for thirty-five years.<sup>3</sup>

The article will address four main topics related to mass immigration and the social and economic transformation of the Great Plains in the half century following the end of the American Civil War. The first is the extent to which this transformation was made possible by the liberal political order that emerged in Europe and North America as a consequence of the six most destructive wars fought between 1854 and 1871. The second considers how the industrial revolution and labor-saving technology, along with greater political freedom, facilitated the rapid settlement and economic transformation of the Great Plains. The third discusses how more than a million young, intelligent, and industrious immigrants from Europe—and smaller numbers from Mexico and Canada—joined American-born citizens in the establishment of new settlements throughout the Great Plains states. In these developments, the experience of Czech, German, and Italian immigrants will be emphasized as having been broadly representative of those who came from other continental European nations. Finally, this article will examine the extent to which railways—whose capitalization and economic benefits exceeded those of all other innovations of the industrial revolution—conditioned patterns of immigration as well as accelerated urbanization, industrialization, and commercial agriculture on the Great Plains.

#### WARS AS PRECONDITIONS FOR SETTLEMENT OF THE GREAT PLAINS

Facilitating all the above developments were the liberal political achievements—including the rule of law, representative government, and enlarged civil liberties—which were largely made possible by six costly wars fought between 1854 and 1871: (1) the Crimean War of 1854 to 1856; (2) the war of 1859 in which France and Piedmont defeated the Austrian Empire and

opened the way to Italian unification; (3) the American Civil War of 1861 to 1865; (4) the conflict of 1862 to 1867 in which the Mexicans expelled their French conquerors and reestablished a republic; (5) the Seven Weeks' War of 1866 in which Prussia and Italy defeated the Austrian Empire and several smaller German principalities; and (6) the Franco-German War of July 1870 to May 1871 in which Prussia and its German allies under Otto von Bismarck's leadership defeated France and established an authoritarian constitutional German Empire under the Hohenzollern dynasty of Prussia.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, in the midst of losing this war, the French began to establish a Third Republic after overthrowing the dictatorial Second Empire of Napoleon III. All in all, the immediate consequences of these six wars not only advanced industrialization, urbanization, civil liberties, and the rule of law in North America and most parts of Europe but also accelerated immigration to the United States from southern and eastern Europe.<sup>5</sup>

The defeat of Imperial Russia by France, Britain, and Piedmont-Sardinia in the Crimean War of 1854–56 had persuaded Czar Alexander II and his advisors to emancipate all serfs on March 3, 1861, as the first step toward limited political and economic reforms that would lay the groundwork for industrialization and increased emigration by the turn of the century. The defeat of the Austrian Empire by France and Piedmont-Sardinia in the summer of 1859 opened the way to the creation of a united and liberal Italian monarchy and persuaded the Habsburgs to transform the Austrian Empire into a constitutional monarchy whose representative political bodies removed obstacles to emigration and encouraged industrialization and state-supported elementary education. The unification of Italy, whose principal political architects were Camillo Benso di Cavour and Giuseppe Garibaldi, had required the military defeat of the Austrian Empire, the Kingdom of Naples, and the Papal State in order to establish liberal Piedmontese law and institutions throughout Italy, to create a national army, navy, railway network, and postal system, and

to inaugurate a *bonifica agraria*—the reclamation of marginal lands for agriculture—and to begin the conquest of malaria, heretofore the principal scourge of the Italian people.<sup>6</sup>

Prussia's and Italy's defeat of the Austrian Empire and its German allies in the Seven Weeks' War of 1866 enabled Italy to annex the Veneto and obliged the Habsburgs in 1867 to grant internal independence to the Hungarians in a reconstituted dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary.<sup>7</sup> In a fifth contemporaneous war of 1862 to 1867, Mexican patriots led by Benito Juárez expelled a French army of occupation and reestablished the Mexican Republic, whose commerce with and emigration to the United States soon expanded after 1880 in conjunction with the construction of compatible railway networks on both sides of the border along the Rio Grande River and through the Sonoran Desert.<sup>8</sup> The Franco-German War of 1870–71 enabled the Prussian monarchy to take the lead in creating a unified Second German Empire whose rapid industrialization, authoritarian political structure, and aggressive foreign policy increasingly destabilized the European balance of power. Contemporaneously with these six wars, the British colonies of North America united peacefully in 1867 to form a transcontinental Dominion of Canada, although Canadian troops were soon obliged to suppress the Red River Rebellion of the Métis under Louis Riel in 1869 and 1870 in what then became the Province of Manitoba.<sup>9</sup> During the same years, the Meiji Restoration created an authoritarian constitutional monarchy in Japan and encouraged a rapid industrialization and expansion of foreign commerce that eventually resulted in Japan's becoming the second largest trading partner of the United States.<sup>10</sup>

Union victory in the American Civil War has long been recognized as essential to making Texas and Kansas into free states and enabling the Great Plains territories to become comparable states characterized by representative government, free labor, corporate enterprise, and mass immigration from continental Europe as well as other parts of North America.

In defeating the Confederacy, the United States abolished the economically inefficient and morally repugnant institution of slavery in the most destructive war ever fought in the Western Hemisphere.<sup>11</sup> By fighting bravely to the bitter end to preserve this ugly institution, the Confederates hastened its eradication and their postwar discovery of more profitable and humane ways to earn a living than by cruelly exploiting human chattel. Moreover, the victory of the United States also facilitated the implementation of the Homestead Act of 1862 and the completion on May 10, 1869, at Promontory Summit, Utah, of the first North American transcontinental railway along "the Overland Route" of the Union Pacific and Central Pacific Railroads.<sup>12</sup>

#### REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT, INDUSTRIALIZATION, AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE GREAT PLAINS

Because the semiarid Great Plains had a relatively tiny population before 1866 and was largely inhospitable to preindustrial agriculture and transport, its emergence within twenty-five years as a region of prosperous cities, small towns, and commercial agriculture cannot be adequately comprehended without reference to mass immigration and improved industrial technology, especially steam railways, telegraphy, internal combustion engines, and electrical power generation and distribution. One should also remember that until improved internal combustion engines were developed for motor vehicles after 1900, horses continued to haul most freight and passengers over short distances in all urban and rural areas.<sup>13</sup>

The industrial revolution, which had begun in Great Britain at the end of the eighteenth century and quickly spread to continental Europe, North America, and Australia promptly produced an unprecedented expansion of manufacturing and agriculture by introducing new industries based on steam power, fossil fuels, and machine production, and financed through a new institution, the

corporation—a limited-liability joint-stock company.<sup>14</sup> New technologies such as steam locomotives, steamships, steam-powered farm machinery, barbed wire, and the Bessemer and Siemens processes for producing inexpensive steel, facilitated the mechanization of industry, agriculture, and food processing, and accelerated the movement of people out of economically backward areas of rural overpopulation—including southern Italy, Ireland, most of Austria-Hungary, and western Russia—into areas where new technologies and industries prevailed.<sup>15</sup> The latter areas initially included Great Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, northern Italy, most of Germany, the American northeast and Middle West, the Canadian provinces of Ontario and Québec, and ultimately the Pacific coast and Great Plains of the United States and Canada along with Australia and New Zealand.

By emphasizing the natural environment and the pioneers who had adapted to it while transforming it, historians have arguably to some extent underestimated the extent to which an international economy and foreign as well as American values and institutions have conditioned the development of the Great Plains states. The harsh extremes of a generally inhospitable climate as well as the attractively distinctive—and even somewhat exotic—landscape of the Great Plains may partially explain why we historians have sometimes overestimated the influence of climate and topography upon that region's economic and social development. Moreover, as some untoward long-term consequences of this rapid transformation of the Great Plains by agriculture, mining, railways, and motor vehicles have become increasingly evident since 1930, historians have ever more critically assessed the extensive damage already done to the natural environment of grasslands and indigenous flora and fauna as well as to traditional Native American cultures. Although the extraordinarily swift and extensive settlement and urbanization of the Great Plains generally brought immense material and cultural benefits to its citizens, this achievement has come at a very high price.<sup>16</sup>

Less often appreciated by American historians is the considerable extent to which the political reforms flowing from the wars of mid-nineteenth-century Europe facilitated the settlement of the Great Plains states and the growth of a prosperous American economy. Unlike the slave-owning founders of the Confederacy, the European defenders of aristocratic prerogatives and authoritarian monarchical government at midcentury chose not to fight on until their way of life and their armies were utterly destroyed but instead fairly quickly made peace to preserve as much of their privileges as possible while conceding to liberal-led constitutional monarchical governments the rule of law, state encouragement of industrialization, and enlarged civil liberties. The latter included the removal of restrictions on emigration, which enabled millions of Poles and Italians and hundreds of thousands of Czechs, Slovaks, Serbs, Croats, Ukrainians, Russians, and Hungarians to leave their homes to seek greater economic opportunities elsewhere—principally in the United States but also in the comparably industrializing areas of France, Germany, Lower Austria, and Bohemia and in the newly opened agricultural lands and growing cities of Argentina and Brazil. The process of peasant emancipation had begun earlier in the nineteenth century with the abolition of the manorial system and the last vestiges of serfdom—including the *robot*, or forced labor, of peasants on the lands of their lords—in Prussia after its defeat by Napoleonic France in October 1806, in the Austrian Empire after the outbreak of revolutions in March 1848, and in Russia on March 3, 1861, as a consequence of Russia's defeat in the Crimea five years earlier by the armies of Great Britain, France, and Piedmont-Sardinia.<sup>17</sup>

Before the American Civil War, an enormous political and cultural difference already existed between the frontier areas of Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas in contrast to those north of the Ohio River, in Missouri, and in the Great Plains from Kansas to the Canadian border. But this difference cannot be attributed to topography nor even to the

American South's slightly higher year-round humidity and greater warmth. As early as 1831, while traveling westward on the Ohio River, Alexis de Tocqueville and Gustave de Beaumont perceived many prosperous Ohio farms on the north bank in contrast to the generally shabby farms along the south bank in Kentucky, a striking contrast that they perceptively attributed to the deleterious presence of slavery.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, amidst the forested frontier of lower Michigan, Tocqueville and Beaumont came across an isolated log cabin in which they were greeted by a pioneer whose newspapers had arrived via stagecoach on a federal post road. Tocqueville immediately grasped how literate and industrious citizens with governmental support had recently and rapidly penetrated what had heretofore been a trackless wilderness.<sup>19</sup>

Before 1865, continental European immigrants had come primarily from western, northern, and central Europe to America's northeastern and midwestern states where free labor prevailed. Thereafter, until 1914, they came increasingly from eastern and southern Europe and settled also in the states of the Great Plains and the West Coast, as world markets swiftly expanded during an era of constitutional representative government, rapid industrialization, and unprecedented peace and prosperity in Europe and North America and one in which Europe became "the world's banker."<sup>20</sup> On both sides of the Atlantic, these accomplishments facilitated nearly a half century of economic growth, rising hourly wages, and corporate profits, though this was a process interrupted by depressions in the early 1870s, in the late 1880s and early 1890s, and in 1907. Furthermore, this increasing international prosperity was accelerated by the fact that no large wars occurred in Europe or the Americas between 1878 and 1914, even though some of the short colonial wars during those years appear in retrospect to have foreshadowed certain aspects of World War I.<sup>22</sup> In all of European history, these four decades of widespread peace and prosperity have been exceeded in length only by the six-and-a-half decades between the

end of the World War II and the onset of the Great Recession of 2007–10.<sup>21</sup>

The Great Plains is not markedly differentiated from other steppe regions by its climate, topography, physical geography, and soils. Primarily what has continued to differentiate the Great Plains from the steppes of Kazakhstan, Siberia, and Sinkiang (Xinjiang) is that Americans and Canadians have since 1865 enjoyed representative governmental institutions, a market economy, and the rule of law as well as mass immigration and capital investment from Great Britain and continental Europe.<sup>23</sup> This massive influx of immigrants was accelerated by the simultaneous creation of international steamship lines and of national railway networks in Europe and the Americas. These new and increasingly more efficient means of transport not only moved people and goods worldwide at unprecedentedly high speeds and lower costs, but railroads also became one the largest employers and consumers of industrial products and raw materials in every country undergoing rapid industrialization and urbanization.

The rapid transformation of the Great Plains after 1865 by commercial agriculture and inexpensive railway transport accelerated at least three more developments with international repercussions. The first was a worsening agricultural depression in Europe during the late 1880s. Despite protective tariffs, European farmers proved less and less capable of producing and transporting grain to domestic markets at prices competitive with American, Canadian, and Argentinian grain planted and harvested by machinery and transported by rail and steamships to European markets. The consequent onset of agricultural depression further stimulated European emigration to the Americas from such agriculturally overpopulated European regions as Ireland, southern Italy, Galicia, southern and southeastern Bohemia, southwestern Norway, and northern Hungary (today's Slovakia). Secondly, European immigrants in the Upper Midwest and Great Plains adjusted, as did American-born farmers and small businessmen, to rapidly

changing economic and social conditions, even though many of these immigrants had initially intended to perpetuate what they deemed to be desirable features of traditional European rural life and religions in what would become their New World homes.<sup>24</sup> Finally, a similar though less extensive agricultural crisis occurred in the United States as farmers in New England and upstate New York found it increasingly difficult to compete in urban northeastern markets with grain carried by rail from the mechanized farms of the Midwest and Great Plains. Consequently, these northeastern American farmers organized the Grange (the Patrons of Husbandry) in order to agitate for governmental regulation of railroad rates designed to prevent alleged discrimination in favor of the long haul as opposed to the short haul. The railroads claimed that this difference in rates was both desirable and fair given the identical costs of loading and unloading freight cars regardless of the distance such cars would travel.<sup>25</sup>

When viewed from a world historical perspective, the history of the United States generally and of the Great Plains in particular seldom reflects popular notions of American exceptionalism sometimes evident in American political discourse and less often in scholarly publications about history or "American studies."<sup>26</sup> Frederick Jackson Turner's poetic portrayal of *The Influence of the Frontier in American History*, so perspicaciously and critically evaluated as early as 1940 by George Wilson Pierson, no longer greatly influences the writing of history of the American West.<sup>27</sup> The history of my hometown of Worthington, Ohio, provides one of the many exceptions to Turner's distinct phases in American westward expansion wherein trappers were followed in succession by farmers, miners, and the founders of cities. Instead, the settlement of Worthington occurred all at once in 1803 by the migration of thirty-eight families from North Granby, Connecticut—including an Episcopal congregation, farmers, factory workers, public schoolteachers, and two innkeepers.<sup>28</sup>

Complementary to Frederick Jackson Turner's thesis were the equally geographically deterministic views of Walter Prescott Webb and Ray Billington. The former eloquently emphasized how aridity—and unpredictably severe weather—conditioned agriculture west of the hundredth meridian, and the latter somewhat exaggerated the extent to which river systems determined the flow of trade as well as the location and growth of cities.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, Webb and other distinguished historians, including Bernard DeVoto, J. Frank Dobie, and Joseph Kinsey Howard, strongly stressed the degree to which the inhabitants and resources of the trans-Missouri West were exploited very much like those of a colony by northeastern and midwestern American corporations and commercial banks.<sup>30</sup> Addison E. Sheldon, superintendent of the Nebraska State Historical Society from 1917 to 1943, and Everett Dick, author of *The Sod-House Frontier, 1854–1890: A Social History of the Northern Plains*, celebrated pioneering settlers in the Great Plains with some emphasis on community development, anecdotal evidence, local color, and individual achievements and shortcomings.<sup>31</sup>

Howard Lamar has properly given more emphasis to the great extent to which the federal government helped to make possible settlement and the establishment of representative government in the territories and states of the trans-Missouri West.<sup>32</sup>

The Great Plains past and present is the subject of deservedly popular fictional works, whose authors typically give precedence to the thoughts and actions of individual characters, including those afflicted by troubles of their own making as well as those whose lives have been shattered by a hostile environment, economic crises, or political events. In this regard, fiction often provides a desirable antidote and alternative perspective to histories colored by American triumphalism or exceptionalism, at least to the extent of obliging historians to evaluate more critically those institutions whose policies and development have affected the lives of ordinary people.<sup>33</sup> However effectively literature may facilitate

historical understanding, particularly of the influence of historical and institutional forces upon individuals, including those most vulnerable to economic crises, literature is generally less effective than history in portraying the development of institutions, laws, businesses, domestic politics, and foreign policy. Moreover, one must avoid the temptation to interpret history primarily through literature and film so as not to base one's evaluation of society and politics largely upon the personalities, conversations, and motives of attractively delineated and extraordinarily memorable fictional characters.

Whether in histories, fiction, film, or politics, uncritical American celebrations of ostensibly self-made men typically reveal a disinclination to express gratitude for the positive influence of families, communities, schools, churches, and civic organizations in developing an individual's knowledge, character, compassion, and other qualities likely to facilitate success in life. Nonetheless, an equally pervasive American propensity to make generous and sometimes belated bequests to universities, churches, and charities often reflects a recognition of personal indebtedness and gratitude to these and other institutions.

Notions of rugged individualism are equally evident in the Czech-language memoirs and German-language letters of individual immigrants who have reported that their greatest adventure was achieving professional or business success or having wrested from farmland a livelihood for themselves and their families.<sup>34</sup> Czech-language memoirs regularly appeared in periodicals such as the *Hospodář* (The Farmer), published in Omaha, and in almanacs and calendars such as *Amerikán* (The American) and *Národ* (The Nation).<sup>35</sup> These memoirs were comparable in many respects to those published in English-language newspapers or in histories of particular cities, counties, and states. Such histories were often sold by subscription and usually contained short biographies of individual community leaders, businesses, churches, and civic associations.<sup>36</sup> More nuanced published memoirs have cred-

ited individual achievement in part to the mutually beneficial endeavors of colleagues, employees, or members of ethnic or religious organizations. Noteworthy in this regard were the publications of the historian, banker, and publicist Tomáš Čapek (1861–1950), including *Mojé Amerika: Vzpomínky a úvahy* (1861–1934), and *Povídka mého života*, the autobiography of František J. Vlček, entrepreneur industrialist and founder of the Vlček Tool Company in Cleveland, Ohio.<sup>37</sup> In these memoirs, as in those of German, Italian, and other immigrants, one discerns no references to differences within any immigrant group that in any way correspond to the U.S. geographical regions in which individuals from that group chose to reside. Such differences that did obtain among immigrants of one nationality appear instead to have corresponded primarily to their religion, occupations, or social class, or else to regional linguistic and political differences within their European mother country.

Omnipresent in facilitating the settlement and urbanization of the Great Plains was a mutually beneficial partnership between government, corporate enterprise, and small businesses—be they agricultural or mercantile—whose positive contributions to later nineteenth- and early twentieth-century population growth, economic prosperity, and political stability are unintelligible without reference to each other. However often the owners of small businesses have given precedence to their own interests, they have nonetheless also helped to create local employment, boost local communities, support law enforcement and public education, and otherwise promote local prosperity. Individual and community self-interest have thus usually coincided with and reinforced one another.<sup>38</sup>

Well understood and delineated by American historians has been the success of the federal government in deploying armies to drive Indians onto reservations, in undertaking scientific exploration, and in subsidizing both the construction of transport infrastructure and the distribution of inexpensive farmland through the Homestead Act of 1862 or by

other means.<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, historians have occasionally underestimated the extent to which governmental institutions, public schools, and technology have continued to contribute to the growth and prosperity of the Great Plains states.<sup>40</sup>

In the Great Plains, the majority of pioneering settlers—whom many economists of the early twenty-first century would define as “human capital”—arrived as ambitious, intelligent, and fully literate young adults, who were usually also married, in the best of health, and approaching the prime of life. These settlers promptly introduced representative governmental institutions to the territories and states of the Great Plains—institutions that had originated in Britain or in British colonies during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and that were still being improved through daily practice and occasional reform by citizens of the states of the Northeast and the Midwest. These pioneering settlers included not only American citizens but also Canadian, British, and continental European immigrants, most of whom arrived with some fiscal assets as well as personal ambition, self-confidence, and a capacity for hard work. To a large degree, their character had already been formed, just as their knowledge had been acquired, elsewhere. Consequently, none of the newly established rural and urban communities in the Great Plains had been obliged to pay for the education or raising of most of their energetic and intelligent “readymade” citizens, most of whom were also well acquainted with the rule of law and with local and provincial self-governmental institutions such as those established in Prussia by the Municipal Law of 1808 and in the Austrian Empire by the legislation of 1862 authorizing *samospráva* (self-government).<sup>41</sup> Moreover, because many foreign-born as well as American-born citizens of the Great Plains appreciated the utility of the liberal arts and sciences, they were initially generous in providing funds for the establishment of public elementary, secondary, and higher education.

Much of the knowledge, skills, and civic engagement of these pioneering settlers may be

attributed to the fact that many of the native-born Americans among them had already obtained a public elementary education and a religious upbringing in states north of the Mason-Dixon Line and the Ohio River.<sup>42</sup> A majority of continental European immigrants also arrived in the Great Plains after having achieved literacy and having learned many of the skills desired by American employers. The Prussian School Law of 1818 created Europe’s first national system of universal, free, compulsory, and state-supported public elementary education. Its immediate success in diminishing illiteracy and in raising the competence of army recruits and industrial workers soon led to its emulation by monarchical governments in almost all other German-speaking principalities.<sup>43</sup> Comparable were the Czech-language public elementary schools authorized by the school law of 1869 as well as the improved French primary schools established by the Jules Ferry Law of 1886.<sup>44</sup> Because literacy in one language has usually facilitated the learning of another, an elementary education and knowledge of agricultural and industrial technology readily enabled Czech, Dutch, German, and Scandinavian immigrants, among others, to obtain employment in America as skilled laborers or, given sufficient capital, to become self-employed farmers or merchants.<sup>45</sup> One should not underestimate the extent to which the positive contribution of these immigrants to community prosperity was facilitated by their having come from countries with mass literacy, self-governmental institutions, civic associations, and technologically advanced agriculture and industry.<sup>46</sup>

The effectiveness of public elementary schools in facilitating agricultural improvement and industrial expansion in the United States and in western, central, and northern Europe may be better appreciated if one contrasts these schools to their less well funded and managed counterparts in Italy, in the Hungarian half of Austria-Hungary, and in the Russian Empire. By 1897, illiteracy still prevailed among Russia’s more than 100 million inhabitants, of whom no more than 104,321 were university

graduates and among whom only 6,360 were women.<sup>47</sup> Although the recently united Italian monarchy had promptly created an effective national railway network and postal and telegraph system, it did not give the same priority or funding to the establishment of universal, free, compulsory, and state-supported elementary and secondary schools.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, immigrants to the United States from eastern and southern Europe, as well as from Mexico, were on average as intelligent and industrious as their generally better educated western and northern European contemporaries, and most of them readily obtained employment as unskilled laborers in manufacturing, mining, and farming.

#### CZECH, GERMAN, AND ITALIAN IMMIGRATION TO THE GREAT PLAINS

Immigration has long been understood in part as a selective process by which emigrants from every country usually demonstrated greater willingness than their sedentary neighbors to take immediate risks in the interests of long-term gain. In leaving their ancestral communities in order to seek a better life for themselves and their families in the New World, they perceived the United States to be a land of almost unlimited opportunity for farmers, industrial workers, and entrepreneurs. Nonetheless, by choosing to reside, insofar as possible, among other immigrants from their own European homeland, and especially among those of like religion or from the same community, they sought to preserve as much as possible of their traditional way of life and maternal language while encouraging their children to learn English and acquire American citizenship. Among every immigrant group, loyalty to one's adopted country, the United States, almost always took precedence over any residual loyalty to one's ancestral homeland, especially after one's children had established their own families in America.

Typically neither the wealthiest nor the poorest Europeans emigrated to the Americas. Those most likely to depart were farmers who

owned six to ten hectares of land, an amount insufficient to support a family but whose sale would pay for transportation to the New World as well as provide some capital to invest in a farm or small business. Many of these immigrants were the second or third sons of families whose eldest sons expected to inherit most of the family property. Moreover, among this large group of young Europeans, the more ambitious, intelligent, and adventurous were those most likely to emigrate. Evidence also indicates that these European immigrants were also among their peers the least willing to defer to authoritarian political traditions or to privileges conferred by wealth, birth, or social status.

To help illustrate how the remarkable economic and political transformation of European and American society facilitated immigration to the United States generally and to the Great Plains in particular, I survey the settlement and acculturation of Czech, German, and Italian immigrants in the Great Plains from 1865 to 1914.<sup>49</sup> These immigrants are not only those whose history and ancestral homelands are best known to me but are also in most respects comparable in their similarities and differences to other European immigrants in the Americas during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>50</sup>

By 1914, Germans, Slavs, and Italians, respectively, constituted the three most numerous groups of continental European immigrants in the United States. Germans became the largest of all immigrant groups in the Great Plains and midwestern states in urban as well as rural areas, whereas Slavs and Italians resided primarily in cities and towns, especially in the larger metropolitan areas along the Great Lakes and in New England, New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey.<sup>51</sup> Americans of Czech origin were the largest Slavic-speaking immigrant group in the Great Plains states from Texas to North Dakota but were outnumbered nationwide by citizens of Polish, Ukrainian, Russian, and Slovak ancestry.<sup>52</sup>

Today, most Czech Americans are descendants of immigrants who came to the United

States from Bohemia, Moravia, and Austrian Silesia between 1865 and 1914. At least a third of these immigrants settled in metropolitan Chicago and Cleveland while nearly a quarter of all Czech immigrants settled in the Great Plains states to which they were attracted by affordable agricultural land, greater political and religious freedom, and attractive commercial opportunities. Just as the history of these states cannot be comprehended without reference to the rest of the nation, neither can their economy be understood apart from that of the Upper Midwest and especially Chicago, as William Cronon has so thoroughly demonstrated in his imaginative and well-documented study of *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*.<sup>53</sup>

Illinois has always held first place in the number of citizens of Czech ancestry, thanks to metropolitan Chicago in which nearly one in every four Czech immigrants chose to reside. Ever since 1890, Nebraska has been the state with the greatest percentage of citizens of Czech ancestry as well as one of five states—including Illinois, New York, Ohio, and Texas—with the largest number of such citizens. Omaha continues to rank fourth among American metropolitan areas with the largest number of Czech American citizens after Chicago, Cleveland, and New York, and ahead of Cedar Rapids, the Twin Cities, St. Louis, Baltimore, and Los Angeles. Up to 1914, most Czech immigrants settled in those parts of the United States in which millions of German and tens of thousands of Scandinavian immigrants were already present. This should occasion no surprise given that all these groups enjoyed a high rate of literacy and comparable financial assets. Also, many Czech Americans spoke German as a second language and were somewhat more likely to intermarry with German Americans than with any other non-Czech ethnic group. In the Great Plains states and in nearby rural Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, Czechs usually settled together in small towns or in rural townships in which they sometimes comprised a majority of the inhabitants. Like all European immigrants, they usually chose to live and work

among people who spoke their mother tongue and who often had arrived from the same or a nearby village.

My research on Czech, German, and Italian immigrants found little to differentiate the experience of each of these groups in the Great Plains from what each experienced in other parts of the United States, aside from the greater difficulties these immigrants encountered in learning how to prosper as farmers in a semiarid climate in which rainfall was highly unpredictable. One exception to this rule was the fact that Czech immigrants who settled in the Great Plains were more likely than their counterparts elsewhere in the United States to have emigrated from rural as opposed to urban areas of Bohemia and Moravia. The only other exception was the fact that Czech American Protestants became proportionately more numerous in Texas and North Dakota than in any other states.<sup>54</sup> But in each of these two instances, what differentiated Czech Americans in the Great Plains had nothing to do with the region's distinctive topography or climate.<sup>55</sup> That German immigrants in the Great Plains were more likely than those elsewhere in the United States to be Lutherans or Mennonites is due primarily to two circumstances in Europe during the last three decades of the nineteenth century, when mass immigration to the Great Plains was at its height. Agricultural depression and agrarian overpopulation in the predominantly Lutheran northern and eastern parts of Prussia persuaded greater numbers and a higher percentage of Germans to emigrate from those areas than from other parts of Germany. Furthermore, the exodus from Russia to North America of more than 250,000 German Russians, a majority of whom were Protestants, began upon their having been subjected to conscription into the Imperial Army in accordance with Dmitrii Miliutin's military reforms of 1874.<sup>56</sup>

During the latter nineteenth century and most of the twentieth century, German Americans constituted the largest ethnic group in the United States so long as one separately distinguished Americans of English,

Welsh, Scots, and Scots-Irish descent among those whose country of origin was Great Britain. Moreover, in the Midwest and Great Plains, German Americans outnumbered all Americans of British ancestry. Of all immigrants, Germans were the most differentiated by religion, social class, politics, dialect, and homeland region, thus always making it difficult to assert broad generalizations about German Americans as a whole.<sup>57</sup> More than half of all German immigrants to the United States had been members of various state Lutheran churches. At least one third were Catholics, and the rest were divided among Calvinist, Methodist, Anabaptist, and Jewish congregations whose size corresponded to the order in which they are here listed. Acculturation generally occurred fairly rapidly among German immigrants, but this process appears to have taken place somewhat more quickly in families where one spouse was Anglo-American or in families of German Methodists or Calvinists as opposed to families of German Lutherans or Catholics.

Although Italian immigrants were differentiated comparably to Germans according to social class, dialect, and homeland region, almost every Italian was a Catholic. In the Great Plains, as elsewhere in the United States, the majority of Italian immigrants came from Sicily and the other southern Italian provinces of Calabria, Campania, Puglia, and the Abruzzo, all of which were characterized in the later nineteenth century by agricultural overpopulation and fairly low rates of literacy.<sup>58</sup> Like other immigrants, Italians typically chose whenever possible to dwell among friends or relatives who had come from the same Old World neighborhoods, though rarely in any American city did a majority of Italian immigrants come from the same place in Italy. One notable exception was Omaha's Little Italy, where nearly three-fifths of its residents came from the town of Carlentini in eastern Sicily.<sup>59</sup>

Jewish immigrants usually associated with their co-religionists in synagogues or in secular Jewish communities, regardless of mother tongue, rather than by identifying primarily

with the dominant immigrant ethnic group from the European country or province of their birth. This practice appears to have facilitated Jewish acculturation in the United States as well as having encouraged friendship and cooperation among Jewish immigrants regardless of their country of origin or their denominational preference, be it Conservative, Orthodox, or Reformed. Noteworthy is the fact that in Czech immigrant communities, Czech Jews were more likely than Czech freethinkers or Catholics to establish English-language as opposed to Czech-language newspapers. An outstanding example is Edward Rosewater, a Czech Jewish immigrant who founded in 1871 the *Pokrok západu* (Progress of the West), the first Czech-language newspaper west of the Missouri River. Within several years he sold this paper to one of his employees, the free-thinking Jan Rosický, in order to establish the *Omaha Bee* as a mass circulation daily and advocate for the Republican Party. Rosický promptly founded other Czech periodicals, including the *Hospodář* (The Farmer) in 1890, which soon became the most circulated Czech-language agricultural weekly in the world and helped to acquaint Czech immigrants with all they needed to know in order to compete successfully as farmers in the Midwest and Great Plains, where climate and soils usually differed markedly from those in Bohemia and Moravia.<sup>60</sup>

Churches of all denominations, as well as synagogues representing different varieties of Judaism, were quickly established in the Great Plains by the first settlers to arrive from abroad or from other parts of the United States, often with financial support from American denominations or from churches overseas.<sup>61</sup> Noteworthy among the many such denominations were German Methodism, German Congregationalism, and Czech Presbyterianism. German Methodism was founded in the Midwest by Wilhelm Nast in 1835 to convert fellow German immigrants to Methodism. He obtained financial support from the Gamble family of Cincinnati's Procter and Gamble Company after his daughter, Fanny, married William Gamble, the son of



**Yukon mlýny**

Jsou nejmodernější, nejdokonalejší a nejlepší mlýny na mouku na celém Jihozápadě. Právě nyní se staví ještě jeden elevator, na 500,000 bushů obilí. Až bude postaven, budeme mít skaditního místa na 800,000 bushů obilí, a budeme mocti vyráběti 1500 bushů mouky denně.

**Žádejte a kupujte  
"YUKON'S BEST FLOUR",  
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Můžete ji obdržeti kdekoliv v Jihozápadních a Jihoovýchodních státech, jakož i v New Yorku, Bostonu, Chicagu a jiných velkých městech. 1-1

**YUKON MILL and GRAIN CO.**

J. F. Kroužil, předs.    A. F. Dobrý, místo-předs.    F. L. Kroužil, taj. a pokl.  
YUKON, OKLAHOMA.

FIG. 1: The Yukon Mill & Grain Co. of Yukon, OK, appeared in an advertisement from *Hospodář* (Vol. 26, No. 1, page 109) illustrating how modern technology lowers the cost and accelerates the speed of food production and distribution. All figures from the author's collection.

James N. Gamble. Fanny Nast Gamble's subsequent philanthropical generosity to German Methodism's educational and charitable work facilitated that denomination's establishment of 740 congregations by 1915 to serve more than 60,000 members in all areas where German immigrants had settled in large numbers, primarily in the Middle Atlantic, Middle Western, and Great Plains states.<sup>62</sup> Meanwhile, the much smaller organization of German Congregational churches had organized German-language congregations in the states of the Old Northwest and in the northern Great Plains with the support of a denomination whose congregations then primarily served native or transplanted New Englanders.<sup>63</sup> Czech Presbyterianism was



FIG. 2: This reverse painted glass assertion of religious piety states in German that "I and my family shall serve the Lord" — "Ich und mein Haus wollen dem Herrn dienen," c. 1875–1885.

established in the late 1880s by Vincenc Pisek with financial support from the Vanderbilt family and other wealthy patrons in order to win converts among freethinking Czech immigrants who preferred not to associate with any church.<sup>64</sup>

The foreign-language parishes of American Catholicism numbered in the thousands by the latter nineteenth century and were led by priests who spoke the appropriate foreign languages in addition to conducting Mass in Latin.<sup>65</sup> For example, in Omaha, Catholics founded the Czech-language Saint Wenceslaus (Svatý Václav) parish in 1877, the German-language St. Joseph's parish in 1886, and the Italian-language St. Francis Cabrini parish (originally St. Philomena's) shortly thereafter. Foreign-language Protestant services were conducted in German at the Kountze Memorial Lutheran Church and other congregations and in Czech at the Bethlehem Presbyterian Church. Before and after the turn of the century, Catholic priests, Protestant pastors, and Jewish rabbis assumed positions of national as well as community leadership as, for example, did the Reverend Jan Vránek of Omaha's Saint Wenceslaus parish and Rabbi Dr. Frederick Cohn of Omaha's Temple Israel.<sup>66</sup>

Czech immigrants to the United States from 1865 to 1914 were unusual in two respects.

First, they exerted extraordinary efforts to try to perpetuate the use their native language primarily because having done so in Europe had been the principal means by which they had maintained their national identity after the Habsburgs had obliterated Czech political autonomy and Protestant and Hussite congregations during the Thirty Years' War of 1618 to 1648. Second, by 1900, Czech Americans became the only European immigrants among whom a majority initially chose not affiliate with any organized religion. Calling themselves freethinkers (*svobodomyslné Češi*), they established gymnastic, educational, and service associations, most notably the Sokol Organization, as well as a variety of fraternal and benevolent societies, like the Czecho-Slavonic Benevolent Society (ČSPS, or Česko-Slovanský Podporující Spolek), the Western Bohemian Fraternal Association (ZČBJ, or Západočí česká Bratrská Jednota), the Unity of Czech Women (JČD, or Jednota Českých Dam), and the Slavic Benevolent Order of the State of Texas (SPJST, or Slovanská Podporující Jednota Státu Texasu). These institutions served many of the same needs as churches by encouraging fellowship and community service as well as self-improvement in knowledge and physical fitness. Nevertheless, an extraordinarily great emphasis upon personal responsibility for individual achievement sometimes worked against social or community solidarity and may have contributed to the relatively high rate of suicide among freethinking as opposed to religious Czech immigrants.<sup>67</sup>

Both world wars accelerated the acculturation of American immigrants and their children, as millions of them demonstrated their loyalty to their adopted country by serving in the armed forces of the United States.<sup>68</sup> Well before American entry into World War I, American sentiment was primarily pro-Allied as is illustrated by the presence of immigrants as well as native-born citizens among the more than 41,000 Americans who joined the Canadian Expeditionary Force before April 1917 in order to fight against Germany.<sup>69</sup> Even many of the Americans

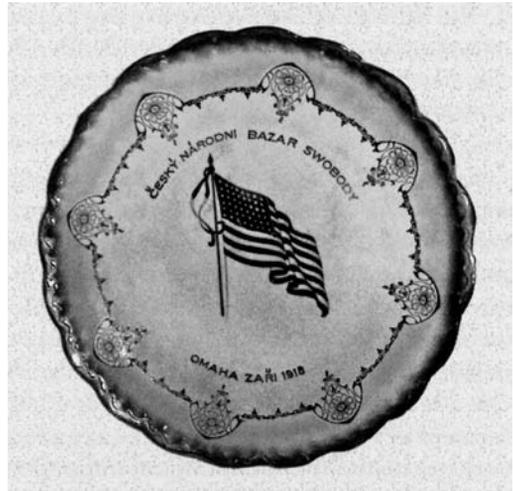


FIG. 3: Plate commemorating the Czech National Bazaar of Freedom in Omaha in September 1918.

who wished their country to remain at peace continued to advocate loans and material aid to the Allies as the best means to diminish the likelihood that the United States would be obliged to defend its national interests by declaring war on Germany.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, most Italian Americans welcomed U.S. support for Italy as one of the principal Allied powers, and after the war, the residents of Omaha's Little Italy joined their friends and relatives in Carlentini, Sicily, in building that town's large war memorial.<sup>71</sup> American Czechs and Slovaks enthusiastically supported their adopted country as well as the wartime revolutionary movement to create an independent Czechoslovak Republic.<sup>72</sup> Nonetheless, to a great extent the "isolationism" prevalent in the Midwest and Great Plains before American entry into each of the world wars was a phenomenon primarily reflecting a desire by many German Americans not to have the United States go to war against Germany and by many Irish Americans not to have the U.S. militarily support Great Britain.<sup>73</sup> But upon American entry into each world war, the vast majority of citizens in these and other ethnic groups did their best to help achieve Allied victory and the postwar reconstruction of Europe.

THE EFFECT OF RAILWAYS ON  
IMMIGRATION AND ON URBANIZATION,  
INDUSTRIALIZATION, AND COMMERCIAL  
AGRICULTURE

From 1865 onward, railway and steamship companies on both sides of the Atlantic carried immigrants as well as European manufactured goods to the United States and on return trips carried agricultural produce, minerals, and—increasingly—manufactured goods to markets in Europe, Canada, and Mexico, thus tying the Great Plains states at the time of their establishment to a burgeoning and swiftly expanding world economy.<sup>74</sup> No technological innovation more profoundly determined patterns of urban and rural settlement in the Great Plains states from North Dakota to Texas than did railways. Their operations made possible the creation of an integrated and ever more prosperous national economy, four standard time zones, and nationwide postal and telegraph systems, while facilitating the nationwide distribution of such goods as barbed wire, steam-powered excavating and farm machinery, and centrally processed meat, lumber, and grain.<sup>75</sup> The rapid construction as well as the economic success of American railways owed much not only to American workers and managers but also to an enormous investment of foreign, especially British and Dutch, capital and the employment of immigrant laborers, including Irish, Chinese, Mexicans, and Italians.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, the construction and operation of railways constituted the greatest adventure in the lives of many employees, be they managers, mechanical engineers, conductors, telegraphers, stationmasters, or locomotive engineers and firemen. Just as railroads became America's "first big business" by the middle of the nineteenth century, so did railway workers create and build the first nationwide craft unions in the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, Americans of that era began to view with concern as well as admiration the power of railroad corporations to influence national, state, and local businesses and politics,



FIG. 4: *Brakeman's lantern from the Burlington and Missouri River Railroad in Nebraska marked "B&MRRR in Neb" on both the lid of the lantern and in the mould-blown globe. Patent date, 1878.*

as implied in such frequently used expressions as "to railroad a man" or "to railroad a bill."

Railroads not only shattered time and distance and transformed the physical landscape, they also established what remain to this day the principal routes of commerce and patterns of rural and urban settlement in the Great Plains states, where federal highways in the early twentieth century and interstate highways after midcentury have usually paralleled the principal east-to-west and north-to-south railway trunk lines. Moreover, the location of most cities and towns between the Missouri River and the Rocky Mountains was determined either by that of the transcontinental railway trunk lines or by their connecting branch lines.<sup>78</sup> Whereas the former lines had been constructed primarily to carry through traffic, the latter had been built to feed traffic to them, including outgoing agricultural pro-

duce, minerals, and processed food and incoming heavy machinery, furniture, and other manufactured items.<sup>79</sup> Great national railway centers emerged on the Great Plains after 1865: Houston became the largest such center in Texas ahead of Dallas, Fort Worth, and El Paso. Denver, “the queen city of the plains,” served as the gateway to the mineral and agricultural wealth of the Rockies. Kansas City, Missouri, became a principal center for railways to the south-central Great Plains. The great Overland Route began at Omaha and Council Bluffs, and the Twin Cities served as the eastern termini of the first two northern transcontinental lines; smaller centers of regional importance arose in Amarillo, Lubbock, Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Pueblo, Fort Scott, Parsons, Salina, Topeka, Wichita, Lincoln, Grand Island, Hastings, Aberdeen, and Fargo.<sup>80</sup>

By the turn of the twentieth century, ever-increasing capital investment and technological improvements to railways—including interlocking signals, continuous air-braking, and cast-integral frames—had steadily reduced the absolute as well as the inflation-adjusted cost of carrying freight and passengers.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, in conjunction with European railways and international steamship lines, American and Canadian railroads helped make possible the most extensive and rapid mass migration of human beings in all of world history. For example, one could purchase a single ticket to travel swiftly from Bologna or any other Italian city directly to Omaha via the ports of Naples and New York, or one could travel from Prague in Bohemia by way of the ports of Hamburg and New York directly to such Czech American communities as Prague, Nebraska, Prague, Oklahoma, or New Prague, Minnesota.

Patterns of immigrant settlement in the Great Plains were frequently determined by the location of railways. For example, most Czech immigrants arrived in Nebraska and Texas and other Great Plains states too late to obtain farmland under the generous terms of the Homestead Act of 1862. But they came just in time to purchase slightly more expensive

land along the main lines or branch lines of the transcontinental railroads and the “greater grangers.”<sup>82</sup> Several scholarly monographs have shown exactly how these railway companies recruited European immigrants by offering to sell them inexpensive land along recently constructed railroad routes. Among these railroads, the Chicago and North Western attracted thousands of Czechs to its “full hand” of branch lines through eastern Nebraska and southeastern South Dakota, including the line from Fremont through Linwood and Morse Bluff to Seward and Hastings, and the line from Norfolk through Verdigre, Nebraska, to Winner, South Dakota. Italian immigrants who typically arrived with little capital found work in the Great Plains principally in railway construction and maintenance, in mining in such places as Louisville and Lafayette, Colorado, and in industries in large cities including St. Paul, Omaha, Kansas City, and Denver.

In almost every facet of immigrant life, the railway was omnipresent. For example, Omaha’s having become the second largest Czech-language publishing center in the United States was facilitated by its status as the seventh or eighth largest American railway center. The National Printing Company (Národní tiskarna) of Omaha not only published Omaha’s daily, weekly, and monthly Czech-language secular periodicals for statewide or national distribution, it also printed and distributed by rail almost all the weekly or monthly Czech-language newspapers that bore the names of smaller towns in Nebraska, Kansas, or South Dakota. Not surprisingly, railroads attracted customers and enthusiasts among native-born Americans generally, as well as immigrants and visitors from Europe, including such famous Czechs as the classical composer Antonín Dvořák and the future president-liberator of Czechoslovakia, T. G. Masaryk. During the first six decades of the twentieth century, Italian American engineers managed the design and production of toy trains by the Lionel Corporation while Italian American immigrants predominated not only



FIG. 5: Illustration of the Omaha printing plant of the *Národní Tiskárna* (National Printing Co.), the second largest Czech-language publisher in the United States.

among that firm's factory workers in Irvington, New Jersey, but also among those of the A. C. Gilbert Co. of New Haven, Connecticut—the manufacturer of American Flyer Trains from 1938 to 1967. Furthermore, during the years 1922 to 1937, the dies for Lionel toy trains were designed and manufactured by the Società Meccanica La Precisa in Naples, Italy.<sup>83</sup>

Texas is one of many states whose modern history is virtually unintelligible without reference to the many ways that railways facilitated its settlement, growth, and prosperity. The history of railroads in the southern Great Plains began with the Texas Legislature's having in December 1836 chartered the Texas Railroad, Navigation and Banking Company. Moreover, no state has a richer, more analytical, or better documented railway history than does Texas, appropriately enough for this state whose railway mileage has since 1880 far exceeded that of any other.<sup>84</sup> S. J. Reed's *A History of Texas Railroads and of Transportation Conditions under Spain and Mexico and the Republic and the State* is still renowned as the most comprehensive scholarly history of railways in a single American state.<sup>85</sup> James Lewellyn Allhands's (1879–1978) classic publications are both per-

sonal memoirs and thoughtful histories based primarily upon his more than three decades of experience in the building and management of Texas railroads, notably the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railway and those that came to comprise the St. Louis Brownsville and Mexico Railroad and subsequently the Gulf Coast Lines. His *Gringo Builders* and *Uriah Lott: Dauntless Pioneer and Man of Vision* are among the best informed of the histories of railway construction anywhere in the United States, given the author's clarity of exposition and his skill in illuminating quantitative evidence with clever and appropriate anecdotes.<sup>86</sup> Both books are also noteworthy in revealing not only the international context in which Texas railroads were designed, built, and operated but also in portraying explicitly and sympathetically the work of Mexican American as well as Anglo-American railway employees.

Another one of the ablest and most articulate railway builders in the Great Plains was General Grenville Dodge, who surveyed and supervised the construction of the transcontinental Overland Route of the Union Pacific Railway (1863–69) between Council Bluffs and Promontory Summit, Utah, as well as most of

the 972-mile main line of the Texas and Pacific Railway from Texarkana through Dallas, Fort Worth, and Midland to El Paso (1873–81), and portions of other western railroads.<sup>87</sup> Other outstanding railway entrepreneurs in the Great Plains and the greater American West included James J. Hill of the Great Northern Railway; Charles Elliott Perkins of the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad and the Burlington and Missouri River Railroad in Nebraska; Cyrus K. Holliday of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe; and E. H. Harriman, who in association with Kuhn, Loeb and Co. purchased the bankrupt Union Pacific at auction in Omaha on November 1, 1897, and who subsequently took control of the Southern Pacific, the Illinois Central, and the Chicago and Alton.<sup>88</sup> These main lines constitute the larger part of today's rebuilt and prosperous Union Pacific and Burlington Northern Santa Fe railway systems, almost all of whose unprofitable branch lines have been abandoned during the past thirty years.<sup>89</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

This article has briefly outlined how, from 1865 to 1914, the expansion of civil liberties, industrialization, mechanized agriculture, steam transport by land and sea, and immigration to the Americas helped make possible the settlement of the Great Plains. These developments also fostered an unprecedented period of prosperity and peace in Europe as well as North America. This great transformation was temporarily halted by World War I and thereafter retarded by postwar political developments, in part by congressional restriction of immigration to the United States and to a larger extent by the triumph in Europe of reactionary political movements that curtailed civil liberties and discouraged emigration: communism in the Soviet Union, fascism in Italy, and Nazism in Germany. Allied victory in World War II led to Italy's becoming a republic in 1946 and to American, British, and French occupation and democratic "reconstruction" of western and southern Germany. The same victory enabled

the Soviet Union and its satellites to establish their rule over all Slavic nations as well as the homelands of Saxons, Prussians, Hungarians, and Romanians, a rule that endured until the collapse of these "People's Republics" in the fall of 1989 and of the Soviet Union itself in 1991. Furthermore, ever since 1918, the prosperity of the Great Plains states has continued to be tied to that of broader American, European, and world markets in good times as well as in periods of financial panic or economic depression. These began with the worldwide agriculture depression during the 1920s and the Great Depression of 1929–38, and continued through the oil embargo and recessions of the early 1970s and 1980s, the dot.com bust of 2001, and the Great Recession of 2007–10.

To a great extent, mass immigration from continental Europe facilitated the settlement and prosperity of the Great Plains states from 1865 to 1914. But this rapid transformation of a semiarid and heretofore sparsely inhabited region into one of thriving cities and farms cannot be adequately understood apart from contemporary political, educational, economic, and technological developments in Europe. Furthermore, in an even broader sense, an appreciation of world as well as European and American history is essential to our understanding of the past and present of Great Plains states and of the diverse origins of their citizens.

#### NOTES

1. I presented an earlier, abbreviated version of this paper, entitled "Immigration to the Great Plains, 1865–1914: War, Politics, Technology, and Economic Development," on March 10, 2010, as a Paul Olson Seminar at the Center for Great Plains Studies at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. On April 9, 2010, I read a revised and shortened version of this paper at the Center's symposium devoted to "Czech and Slovak Americans: International Perspectives from the Great Plains."

2. Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, trans. S. G. C. Middlemore (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1929), 21.

3. Although the United States is the oldest of the large republics of the world and the only one whose longevity approaches half that of the ancient

Roman Republic, historians of Europe and Asia—and especially those of the ancient and medieval worlds—are accustomed to studying developments through much longer periods of time than is typically the case for historians of the United States. The latter's areas of specialization tend to be more restricted in time and subject matter, though not necessarily in geographical extent, as is evident in the enormous size of North America and in the current enthusiasm for studying Atlantic history. Moreover, because historians of the United States tend to be monolingual, they are less likely than historians of Europe to examine foreign-language sources, some of which provide useful perspectives or information concerning such aspects of American history as immigration, commerce, and foreign policy.

4. Otto Pflanze, *Bismarck and the Unification of Germany: The Process of Unification, 1815–1871* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963); Eugene N. Anderson, *The Social and Political Conflict in Prussia, 1858–1864* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1954); and Michael Howard, *The Franco-Prussian War: The German Invasion of France, 1870–71* (New York: Macmillan, 1962).

5. A smaller contemporary conflict with equally momentous consequences for world history was the Boshin War of January 1868 to May 1869 by which the Meiji emperor suppressed rebel troops loyal to the Shogun in order to inaugurate the “modernization” of Japan. In November 1867, upon the Meiji emperor's ascending the throne and his “restoration” of Imperial executive authority, power was relinquished by the fifteenth and last Tokugawa Shogun, Tokugawa Yoshinobu, who resigned; but samurai loyal to Yoshinobu rebelled against the emperor in January 1868 until they were defeated by Imperial troops from the Chōshū and Satsuma domains. On the Meiji Restoration and its consequences, see Hugh Borton, *Japan's Modern Century* (New York: Ronald Press, 1955), and Jonathan Bailey, *Great Power Strategy in Asia: Empire, Culture, and Trade, 1905–2005* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

6. Throughout this essay, I refer to European—as opposed to American—liberals and liberalism. Readers should also be aware that local and regional representative government after 1860 in Italy, Germany, and Austria-Hungary was based on “class” or “curial” voting weighted in favor of wealth and higher education. Such suffrage in the Austro-Hungarian context is discussed by Bruce M. Garver, *The Young Czech Party, 1874–1901, and the Emergence of a Multi-Party System* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1978). On the unification of Italy and its consequences, see Dennis Mack Smith, *Cavour and Garibaldi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), with an updated introduction

to the classic 1954 edition; Alberto Mario Banti, *Il Risorgimento italiano* (Bari: Laterza, 2006); Aldo Mola, *Giolitti: Lo statista della nuova Italia* (Milano: Mondadori, 2003); Giovanni Montroni, *La società italiana dall'unificazione alla Grande Guerra* (Bari: Laterza, 2007); Alfonso Scirocco, *Garibaldi: Citizen of the World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007); and Frank M. Snowden, *The Conquest of Malaria: Italy, 1900–1962* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006).

7. Geoffrey Wawro, *The Austro-Prussian War: Austria's War with Prussia and Italy in 1866* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), is the best study of this conflict.

8. This occurred from the May 1862 Mexican defeat of a French army at Puebla through the June 1863 French occupation of Mexico City to the January 1867 withdrawal of all French forces at the behest of the United States. The French puppet Emperor Maximilian of Habsburg was executed in Queraro in May 1867 in reprisal for his having in 1865 ordered the shooting of any Mexican troops who were wounded or captured by the French.

9. Maggie Siggins, *Riel: A Life of Revolution* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 1994).

10. Growing trade with Japan added to the transcontinental freight traffic and earnings of the Union Pacific, Southern Pacific, Great Northern, and Northern Pacific Railroads and thus contributed in a small way to the economy of the Great Plains states. Japanese immigration to the United States would also have grown rapidly had it not been largely curtailed by the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907 by which the Japanese government ceased to issue passports to its citizens wishing to obtain employment in the continental United States, with the exception of children, spouses, and parents of Japanese who were already U.S. residents. Japanese immigrants continued to come to the Territory of Hawaii. See also note 5 above.

11. An enormous scholarly literature discusses the American Civil War. Arguably the best single-volume survey is James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

12. Technically, this transcontinental line was not completed until the Union Pacific's opening in 1872 of a bridge across the Missouri River between Omaha and Council Bluffs. The most thorough scholarly study of the construction of the Overland Route is that of David Howard Bain, *Empire Express: Building the First Transcontinental Railroad* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1999). Concerning this enterprise, as well as the subsequent history of the Union Pacific, see Maury Klein, *Union Pacific*, vol. 1: *The Birth of a Railroad, 1862–1893*, and *Union Pacific*, vol. 2: *The Rebirth, 1894–1969* (Garden City,

NY: Doubleday, 1987). Vol. 1, pp. 219–27, describes the meeting at Promontory Summit.

13. See Ann Norton Greene, *Horses at Work: Harnessing Power in Industrial America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

14. See Sidney Pollard, *Integration of the European Economy since 1815* (1981; London: Routledge, 2006); Sidney Pollard and Colin Holmes, *Documents of European Economic History, vol. 2: Industrial Power and National Rivalry, 1870–1914*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1972); and James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), who clearly indicates the extent to which worldwide settlement by British emigrants preceded as well as flourished during the industrial revolution.

15. See Joel Mokyr, *The Lever of Riches: Technological Creativity and Economic Progress* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); Joanne S. Liu, *Barbed Wire* (Missoula, MT: Mountain Press Publishing, 2009).

16. See, for example, Michael Forsberg, Dan O'Brien, and David Wishart, *Great Plains: America's Lingerin' Wild* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), and John Price, *Not Just Any Land: A Personal and Literary Journey into the American Grasslands* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).

17. Emancipation of the serfs of Russia occurred on February 19, 1861, by the Julian calendar. Surveys of this event and its long-range consequences include Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Russian Empire, 1801–1917* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967); W. E. Mosse, *Alexander II and the Modernization of Russia*, rev. ed. (New York: Collier Books, 1962), and Geroid Tanquary Robinson, *Rural Russia under the Old Regime* (New York: Macmillan, 1932).

18. "On the two sides the soil is equally fertile, the position as favourable, yet everything is different." Tocqueville also advocated the immediate as opposed to the gradual emancipation of slaves, contending that "only the experience of freedom, a long-term freedom contained and directed by an energetic and moderate power, will suggest and give men opinions, virtues and customs worthy of citizens of a free country." George Wilson Pierson, *Tocqueville and Beaumont in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938), reprinted as *Tocqueville in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 566–69.

19. *Ibid.*, 242–44.

20. Herbert Feis, *Europe, the World's Banker, 1870–1914: An Account of European Foreign Investment and the Connection of World Finance with Diplomacy before World War One* (1930; New York: W. W. Norton, 1965).

21. This prosperity was interrupted by ten recessions, of which only two lasted more than one year: that of November 1973 to March 1975, and of July 1981 to November 1982.

22. These short wars included the Italians' attempt to conquer Ethiopia, which ended in their defeat at Adowa in 1896; the Spanish-American War of 1898; the American suppression of the ensuing Filipino insurrection of 1898–1903; the Boer War of 1899–1902; the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5; the Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908; and the Italian conquest of Tripoli (now Libya) beginning in 1911.

23. In this respect, comparable to the Great Plains of the United States and Canada are the semiarid regions of Australia whose citizens, like all Australians, have enjoyed representative institutions, the rule of law, and since 1945, mass immigration from all parts of Europe. Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, stresses the ongoing importance of British trade, investment, and institutions, as well as emigration, in fostering the prosperity and rapid growth of the United States as well as the English-speaking overseas dominions of the British Empire. He also demonstrates how German and Scandinavian immigrants readily adapted to Anglo institutions, values and expectations. By contrast, my essay gives more emphasis to the comparable experience in the United States of Czech immigrants and of the American-born children of those Italian and Slavic immigrants who had arrived with little capital or formal education.

24. Jon Gjerde, *From Peasants to Farmers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), discusses in explicit detail the experience in the Upper Midwest of Norwegian immigrants from Balestrand, Norway.

25. Albro Martin, *Enterprise Denied: Origins of the Decline of American Railroads, 1897–1917* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971); William Z. Ripley, *Railroads, Rates, and Regulation* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1912).

26. Though American participation was essential to achieving Allied victory in both world wars, our allies did most of the fighting and suffered by far the greater casualties. For example, the French Army killed more Germans in World War I than did any other army, and the Red Army accomplished the same feat in World War II.

27. See George W. Pierson, "The Frontier and American Institutions: A Criticism of the Turner Thesis," *New England Quarterly* 15 (June 1942): 224–55, and also Richard C. Wade, *The Urban Frontier: Pioneer Life in Early Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Lexington, Louisville, and St. Louis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964).

28. Virginia E. McCormick and Robert W. McCormick, *New Englanders on the Ohio Frontier: Migration and Settlement of Worthington, Ohio* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1998). The heads of these thirty-eight families, constituting the Scioto Company, established Worthington on high ground one mile east of the Olentangy River in central Ohio in 1803, the same year Ohio became a state. Worthington's Episcopal congregation was the first established west of the Alleghenies, and its Masonic lodge, founded in 1804, is the oldest in continuous use west of the Alleghenies. For the broader context, see R. Douglas Hurt, *The Ohio Frontier: Crucible of the Old Northwest, 1720–1830* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).

29. Ray Allen Billington, *The Far Western Frontier, 1830–1861* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956); Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Plains* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1931).

30. Outstanding histories of the settlement of the territories and states in the Great Plains include Bernard DeVoto, *The Course of Empire* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1952); J. Frank Dobie, *The Longhorns* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1947); Joseph Kinsey Howard, *Montana High, Wide, and Handsome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943); Elwyn B. Robinson, *History of North Dakota* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966); Michael P. Malone, *The Battle for Butte: Mining and Politics on the Northern Frontier, 1864–1906* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985); Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1987); and James C. Olson and Ronald C. Naugle, *History of Nebraska*, 3rd ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997).

31. Everett Dick, *The Sod-House Frontier, 1854–1890: A Social History of the Northern Plains from the Creation of Kansas and Nebraska to the Admission of the Dakotas* (1954; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979). See also Everett Dick, *Vanguards of the Frontier: A Social History of the Northern Plains and Rocky Mountains from the Fur Traders to the Sod Busters* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965).

32. See Howard Lamar, *Dakota Territory, 1861–1889: A Study of Frontier Politics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1956), and *The Far Southwest, 1846–1912: A Territorial History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966).

33. Authors of such works pertaining to the Great Plains include Ivan Doig, whose Montana childhood is reflected in his autobiographical *Heart Earth and This House of Sky: Landscapes of a Western Mind*; Frank L. Baum (1856–1919), whose allegorical *The Wizard of Oz* inspired a movie as well as many fictional sequels; Laura Ingalls Wilder

(1867–1957) whose *Little House on the Prairie* introduced a best-selling series of related books; Willa Cather (1873–1947), author of *My Ántonia* and other studies of frontier life; Elmwood, Nebraska's Bess Streeeter Aldrich (1881–1954), who wrote *Rim of the Prairie* and many short stories; Wright Morris (1910–1998) of Central City, Nebraska, whose novels include *The Home Place* (1948), *Ceremony in Lone Tree* (1965), *The Field of Vision* (1965), and *In Orbit* (1967); Louise Erdrich, author of such popular novels as *Love Medicine* and *The Beet Queen*; and Mari Sandoz (1896–1966), best known for her biographies *Old Jules* and *Crazy Horse* and for many novels, including *Capitol City*, whose characteristics resemble those of Lincoln, Nebraska.

34. A representative collection of German-language letters from German American immigrants appears in *Briefe aus Amerika: Deutsche Auswanderer schreiben aus der Neuen Welt, 1830–1930*, ed. W. Helbich, W. B. Kamphoefner, and U. Sommer (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1988).

35. Translations of such memoirs from Czech immigrants in Texas appear in Clinton Machann and James W. Mendl Jr., *Czech Voices: Stories from Texas in the Amerikán Národní Kalendář* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1991). Founded by Joseph Svoboda, the Czech Heritage Collection in Love Library at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln includes comprehensive runs of *Amerikán* as well as other Czech-language almanacs like the Catholic *Národ*.

36. Examples include Arthur C. Wakeley, ed., *Omaha: The Gate City, and Douglas County, Nebraska: A Record of Settlement, Organizations, Progress, and Achievement*, 2 vols. (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1917); and Addison Erwin Sheldon, *Nebraska: The Land and the People*, 3 vols. (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1931). In each of these titles, the first volume discusses history, and every other volume contains short biographies, most of which celebrate men of wealth and civic influence.

37. Tomáš Čapek, *Mojé Amerika: Vzpomínky a úvahy (1861–1934)*, (Praha: František Borový, 1935), and František J. Vlček in *Povídka mého života*, 2nd ed. (Praha: Družstevní Práce, 1929). The latter work was also published as Frank Vlček, *The Story of My Life*, trans. and ed. Winston Chrislock (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2005).

38. Allan G. Bogue demonstrates how improvements in agriculture and corporate enterprise advanced the settlement and prosperity of Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. See his *From Prairie to Corn Belt: Farming on the Illinois and Iowa Prairies in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), and *Money at Interest: The Farm Mortgage on the Middle Border*

(Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, Bison Books, 1969).

39. Michael L. Tate, *The Frontier Army in the Settlement of the West* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999); Joseph C. Porter, *Paper Medicine Man: John Gregory Bourke and His American West* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989); William Goetzmann, *Army Exploration in the American West, 1803–1863* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1959); *Exploration and Empire: The Explorer and the Scientist in the Winning of the American West* (New York: Alfred Knopf 1967); and *The West of the Imagination* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009). See also Howard R. Lamar, ed., *The New Encyclopedia of the American West* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).

40. In exaggerated form, this point of view is evident today in the disinclination of some Americans to acknowledge gratefully such positive achievements of the federal government as national defense, Social Security, Medicare, FDIC-insured bank accounts, farm price supports, and measures to promote public health and safety.

41. On such institutions generally, see Eugene N. Anderson and Pauline R. Anderson, *Political Institutions and Social Change in Continental Europe in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967). On *samospráva*, see Garver, *The Young Czech Party*, 89–98.

42. Not all pioneering settlers from the American South had received a comparable education. Universal, free, compulsory, and tax-supported elementary schools did not generally begin to appear south of the Mason-Dixon Line until after the advent of “radical” Reconstruction in 1867.

43. See Hajo Holborn, *A History of Modern Germany*, vol. 2: 1648–1840 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), 472–84; and Gordon Craig, *Germany, 1866–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 186–92.

44. Michel Gaillard, *Jules Ferry* (Paris: Librairie Fayard, 1989), examines the Ferry Law and its consequences. The Guizot Law of 1833 had authorized French communes to establish public elementary schools but had provided no national funding for them. Garver, *Young Czech Party*, 94–95, 112–13, and 203–4, discusses the establishment of universal, free, compulsory, and state-supported public schools in Bohemia and Moravia in the context of other political and economic reforms introduced by self-governmental bodies in the Austrian Empire after its military defeat by France and Piedmont at Solferino in July 1859 and by Prussia and Italy in the Seven Weeks’ War of 1866. A comparable system of primary schools was gradually established in Great Britain by 1902, though official observers, notably Matthew

Arnold, had decades earlier advocated Britain’s emulation of German primary and secondary education. See Matthew Arnold, *Democratic Education*, ed. R. H. Super (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962); and *Schools and Universities on the Continent*, ed. R. H. Super (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1964), vols. 2 and 4, respectively, of *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*.

45. A classic autobiography that emphasizes an immigrant’s education before and after arrival in America is that of Serbian immigrant Michael Pupin, *From Immigrant to Inventor* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1923).

46. After 1871, the newly united German Empire promptly surpassed France in the production of iron, coal, and steel, and overtook Great Britain in this respect by 1910. Moreover, by that time, Germany led the world in the size and quality of its chemical industry and was second only to the United States in the generation of electricity as well as in the production of iron, coal, steel, and aluminum. Within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Czech firms excelled in food processing and in the manufacture of machine tools, internal combustion engines, and transportation equipment generally. Each of the Scandinavian countries manufactured and exported high-quality consumer goods. Belgium was the world’s sixth largest steel producer; Italy led in the generation of hydroelectric power and in mileage of electrified railways; and France possessed Europe’s largest automotive industry and retained its leadership in high-quality porcelain and art glass as well as in the fashion industry.

47. Seton-Watson, *The Russian Empire*, 477–78. In the same year only 1,072,977 students—less than half of whom were women—were enrolled in secondary schools throughout the vast Russian Empire, whose population exceeded 100 million.

48. Albert Schram, *Railways and the Formation of the Italian State in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2008; Maurice Neufeld, *Italy: School for Awakening Countries* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1961); Luigi Salvatorelli, *The Risorgimento: Thought and Action*, trans. Mario Domandi (New York: Harper and Row, 1970); and Christopher Duggan, *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy since 1796* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2007).

49. Pertinent to this essay are various short entries in David Wishart, *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), including one in which I discuss “Czechs” on page 228. The best bibliography of publications by and about Czechs in the U.S. and Canada is Esther Jeřábek, *Czechs and Slovaks in North America: A Bibliography* (New York: Czechoslovak National

Council of America and the Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences, 1976).

50. I have addressed the history of "Czech and Slovak Americans from an International Perspective" in the March and April 2010 issues of *Prairie Fire* (Lincoln, NE) and in a longer online version, <http://www.prairiefirenewspaper.com/2010/03/czech-and-slovak-americans-from-an-international-perspective>.

51. By 1920, German immigrants constituted nearly one-half of the population of North Dakota, one-third that of Nebraska, and were a large presence in the other Great Plains states, especially Texas. See Terry Jordan, *German Seed in Texas Soil: Immigrant Farmers in Nineteenth-Century Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1966). On German immigrants generally, see Hans W. Gatzke, *Germany and the United States: A "Special Relationship"* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980); and Albert Bernhardt Faust, *The German Element in the United States, with Special Reference to Its Political, Moral, Social, and Educational Influence* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1909).

52. On Slavic immigrants generally, see Charles A. Ward, Philip Shashko, and Donald E. Pienkos, *Studies in Ethnicity: the East European Experience in America* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, distributed by Columbia University Press, 1980); and on Polish immigrants in particular, see John J. Bukowczyk, ed., *Polish Americans and Their History: Community, Culture, and Politics* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996).

53. William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991).

54. Bruce M. Garver, "Czech-American Protestants: A Minority within a Minority," *Nebraska History* 74, nos. 3–4 (Fall/Winter 1993): 150–67. I edited this double issue on *The Czech-American Experience* in which appear eleven other articles about different aspects of this experience, by Joseph Svoboda, Josef Opatrný, Gregory Ference, Zdeněk Šolle, David Murphy, Clinton Machann, Karel Pichlík, Ivan Dubovický, Míla Šašková-Pierce, Frederick C. Luebke, and jointly by Lawrence H. Konechny and Clinton Machann.

55. In the conference paper from which this article has been developed, I briefly described my childhood introduction to Americans of Czech, German, and Italian origin. My ethnic background is predominately Finnish and German and to a lesser extent English and French.

56. Forrest A. Miller, *Dmitrii Miliutin and the Reform Era in Russia* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1968); and Janet Warkentin Rife, *Germans and German-Russians in Nebraska* (Lincoln, NE: Center for Great Plains Studies, 1980). See also

Renee M. Leig Reid, "German Russians," in Wishart, *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains*, 232.

57. Particular groups of German immigrants are addressed in growing scholarly literature that includes Frederick C. Luebke, *Immigrants and Politics: The Germans of Nebraska, 1880–1900* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1969); Andreas Reichstein, *German Pioneers on the American Frontier: The Wagners of Texas and Illinois* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2001); and Linda Schelbitzki Pickle, *Contented among Strangers: Rural German-Speaking Women and Their Families in the Nineteenth-Century Midwest* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996).

58. Works on Italian immigration include Piero Bevilacqua, Andreina De Clementi, and Emilio Franzina, *Storia dell'emigrazione italiana*, vol. 1: *Partenze*, and vol. 2: *Arrivi* (Roma: Donzelli editore, 2001 and 2002); Dorothy Hoobler and Thomas Hoobler, *The Italian-American Family Album* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); and Patrizia Varetto, ed., *The World in My Hand: Italian Emigration in the World, 1860–1960* (Rome: Centro Studi Emigrazione, 1997). The latter work celebrates a 1997 exhibition at Ellis Island.

59. Trish Coate is completing a master of arts thesis in history at the University of Nebraska at Omaha on this subject. See Lori Rice, "Little Italy: A UNO Student Studies the Small Sicilian Town that Shaped Omaha and Its Italian Community," *UNO Magazine*, Summer 2010, 22–24.

60. The Czech Heritage Collection of the Archives & Special Collections of the University of Nebraska–Lincoln has in print or in microfilm a complete run of the *Hospodář* from its first issue in 1890 through the 1960s when its editorial office moved to West, Texas. *Pokrok západu* was published in Omaha from 1871 through most of 1920.

61. D. Michael Quinn, "Religion in the American West," in *Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America's Western Past*, ed. William Cronon, George Miles, and Jay Gitlin (New York: W. W. Norton, 1992), 145–66.

62. Paul Douglas, *The Story of German Methodism: Biography of an Immigrant Soul* (Cincinnati: Methodist Book Concern, 1939). Pages 11, 23, and 148 discuss ties between the Nast and Gamble families. For information about individual congregations and ministers, three books are invaluable: C. Golder, John H. Horst, and J. G. Schaal, eds., *Geschichte der Zentral Deutschen Konferenz: Einschliesslich der Anfangsgeschichte des deutschen Methodismus* (Cincinnati: Jennings and Graham, c. 1907), covers congregations in Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Kentucky, West Virginia, and western Pennsylvania. E. C. Magaret, Friedrich Münz, et al., eds., *Jubiläumsbuch der St. Louis Deutschen*

*Konferenz* (Cincinnati: Jennings and Graham, c. 1900), presents congregations in Illinois, Iowa, and eastern Missouri. Otto E. Kriege, Gustav Becker, Mätthaus Herrmann, and C. L. Körner, eds., *Souvenir der West Deutschen Konferenz der Bischöflichen Methodistenkirche* (Cincinnati: Jennings and Graham, 1906), surveys congregations in Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Colorado, and western Missouri.

63. George J. Eisenach, *A History of the German Congregational Churches in the United States* (Yankton, SD: Pioneer Press, 1938).

64. Garver, "Czech-American Protestants," cited in note 54; Bruce Garver, "Czech-American Freethinkers on the Great Plains, 1871–1914," in *Ethnicity in the Great Plains*, ed. Frederick C. Luebke (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), 147–69. In the same book, see also Josef J. Barton, "Czech Farmers and Mexican Laborers in South Texas," 190–209.

65. The American Czech-language Catholic parishes and priests are individually described in Antonín Petr Houst, *České katolické osady v Americe, 1865–1890* (St. Louis: Bratři Wandasů, 1890). The much fewer Czech-American Protestant congregations and ministers are discussed by Vilem Šiller, Václav Prucha, and R. M. De Castello, *Památník Českých Evanjelických církví v Severní Americe* (Chicago: Křesťanský Posel, 1900).

66. Jan Vránek achieved international recognition for his published poetry, for example, *Na půdě americké: Básně* [On American Soil: Poems] (Chicago: Tiskárna Českých Benediktinů, 1905). Dr. Frederick Cohn served as rabbi of Temple Israel from 1904 into the mid-1930s and also as a national spokesman for Reformed Judaism.

67. I discuss these benevolent associations in "Czech-American Freethinkers on the Great Plains," 158–62. Among them, only the SPJST, affectionately called the "special people Jesus sent to Texas," was composed of members who resided solely in one state. Founded in Omaha in 1897 by representatives of the western American lodges of the ČSPS, the ZČBJ admitted women as well as men to full membership and based benefits in part on life expectancy.

68. Appropriately enough during World War II, three descendants of German immigrants in the Great Plains numbered among the highest ranking and most influential U.S. commanders: Dwight D. Eisenhower (1890–1969), the Supreme Allied Commander of forces in Western Europe; Albert C. Wedemeyer (1897–1989) of Omaha, the author of the U.S. Army's Victory Program of 1941 for the defeat of Germany and commander of U.S. forces in China during the last ten months of the war; and Chester W. Nimitz (1885–1966) of Fredericksburg,

TX, Commander-in-Chief of all U.S. Navy forces in the Pacific after mid-December 1941.

69. T. J. Harris, "Yankees Who Fought for the Maple Leaf: A History of the American Citizens Who Enlisted Voluntarily and Served with the Canadian Expeditionary Force before the United States of America Entered the First World War, 1914–1917" (master of arts thesis, University of Nebraska at Omaha, December 1997).

70. By providing food, credit, and even munitions to the Allies, Americans increased the likelihood that the Allies could win the war without direct American military involvement. Among popular politicians who sought to maintain American neutrality were Nebraskans William Jennings Bryan (1860–1925), a three-time unsuccessful Democratic presidential candidate, and George W. Norris (1861–1944), a senator who in 1917 and again during 1940 and 1941 cultivated isolationist German American voters as opposed to supporting Wilson and FDR, respectively, in defending American national interests and preventing any German domination of Europe.

71. Trish Coate's forthcoming master's thesis on Omaha's Little Italy includes a chapter on the construction and dedication of the war memorial in Carlentini.

72. Noteworthy is the fact that in September 1914, Czech Americans in Omaha undertook the first public subscription of funds to support the interests of Czechs in Bohemia and Moravia against Austria-Hungary. See Vojta Beneš, "Omaha v čele," in *Československá Amerika v období, vol. 1: Od června 1914 do srpna 1915* (Prague: Pokrok, 1931), 130–36. On Czech- and Slovak-American participation in the wartime struggle for Czechoslovak independence, see also Vojta Beneš, *Vojáci zapomenuté fronty* (Prague: Památník odboje, 1923); and František Šindelář, *Za boje za svobodu otčiny* (Chicago: Národní Svaz Českých Katolíků, 1924). On the prewar background to these developments, see Bruce Garver, "T. G. Masaryk and Czech Politics, 1906–1914," in T. G. Masaryk: *Thinker and Statesman*, ed. Stanley Winters (London: Macmillan, 1990), 1:225–57.

73. See Frederick C. Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty: German-Americans and World War I* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974). On isolationism before and after World War II, particularly with regard to German American and Irish American voters, see Samuel Lubell, *The Future of American Politics* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965); and Samuel Lubell, *The Future While It Happened* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1974).

74. Fred A. Talbott, *The Railway Conquest of the World* (London: William Heinemann, 1911); Carlos A. Schwantes and James P. Ronda, *The West the*

*Railroads Made* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008); and Christian Wolmar, *Blood, Iron, and Gold: How the Railroads Transformed the World* (New York: Public Affairs, 2010).

75. On excavating and mining machinery, see Harold F. Williamson and Kenneth H. Myers II, *Designed for Digging: The First 75 Years of Bucyrus-Erie Company* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1955). On the use of such machinery in the southern Great Plains, see Simon W. Freese and Deborah L. Sizemore, *A Century in the Works: Freese and Nichols, Consulting Engineers, 1894–1994* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1994).

76. See Augustus J. Veenendaal, *Slow Train to Paradise: How Dutch Investment Helped Build American Railroads* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996).

77. See Alfred D. Chandler Jr., *The Railroads: The Nation's First Big Business* (New York: Harcourt Brace and World, 1965); and Alfred D. Chandler Jr., *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977). On the Brotherhoods, see Paul Michel Taillon, *Good, Reliable, White Men: Railroad Brotherhoods, 1877–1917* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2009).

78. On the building of transcontinental railroads across the Great Plains, see Albro Martin, *James J. Hill and the Opening of the Northwest* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976); Keith L. Bryant Jr., *History of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway* (New York: Macmillan, 1974); Julius Grodinski, *Transcontinental Railroad Strategy, 1869–1893* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1962); Richard C. Overton, *Burlington Route: A History of the Burlington Lines* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965); H. Roger Grant, *The North Western: A History of the Chicago and North Western Railway System* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996); Stuart Daggett, *Chapters on the History of the Southern Pacific* (New York: Ronald Press, 1922); and Donovan L. Hofsommer, *The Southern Pacific: 1901–1985* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1986). On some of these railways' eastern connections, see Julius Grodinski, *The Iowa Pool: A Study in Railroad Competition, 1870–1884* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950); and H. Roger Grant, *The Corn Belt Route: A History of the Chicago Great Western Railroad Company* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1984).

79. The most thorough discussion to date of the founding and development of cities in a single Great Plains state is James Shortridge, *Cities on the Plains: The Evolution of Urban Kansas* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004). On the disappearance of some Kansas towns, many of which

had obtained no railway service, see Daniel C. Fitzgerald, *Ghost Towns of Kansas: A Traveler's Guide* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1988), and *Faded Dreams: More Ghost Towns of Kansas* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994).

80. For example, see Carroll Engelhardt, *Gateway to the Northern Plains: Railroads and the Birth of Fargo and Moorhead* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007); A. Theodore Brown and Lyle W. Dorsett, K.C.: *A History of Kansas City, Missouri* (Boulder, CO: Pruett Publishing Co., 1978); Carla Johnson, *Union Pacific and Omaha Union Station* (David City, NE: South Platte Press, 2001); and the DVD film, "Denver Union Station: Portal to Progress" (Denver, CO: Havey Productions, 2010), which may be previewed at: <http://www.haveypro.com/unionstation.html>. All railway centers mentioned in my essay may be found in Andrew M. Modelski, *Railroad Maps of North American: The First Hundred Years* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1984).

81. Carl W. Condit, *The Port of New York: A History of the Rail and Terminal System from the Beginnings to Pennsylvania Station* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); Carl W. Condit, *The Port of New York: A History of the Rail and Terminal System from the Grand Central Electrification to the Present* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); Albro Martin, *Enterprise Denied*; John H. White Jr., *The American Railroad Freight Car: From the Wood-Car Era to the Coming of Steel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); and John H. White Jr., *The American Railroad Passenger Car* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

82. Paul Wallace Gates, *The Illinois Central Railroad and Its Colonization Work* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934). See also works by H. Roger Grant and by Richard C. Overton, cited in note 78.

83. Ron Hollander, *All Aboard! The Story of Joshua Lionel Cowen and His Lionel Train Company* (New York: Workman Publishing, 1981), 96, 132, and 159. The firm's founder, Joshua Lionel Cowen, was the son of Jewish immigrants as were most of the firm's executives in finance, marketing, and sales.

84. The scholarly and stylistic quality of this history remains unsurpassed by that of any other state even though the number of publications—especially those containing copious photographs—on the history of Colorado's railroads is much larger. Besides, in contrast to the generally prosperous railroads of Texas, those of Colorado did not avoid bankruptcy, and even the best among them were marginal to the performance of the American economy.

85. S. J. Reed, *A History of Texas Railroads and of Transportation Conditions under Spain and Mexico*

and the Republic and the State (Houston: St. Clair Publishing Co., 1941). See also Jane P. Baughman, *Charles Morgan and the Development of Southern Transportation* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1968); and Vernon Gladden Spence, *Colonel Morgan Jones: Grand Old Man of Texas Railroading* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971).

86. J. L. Allhands, *Gringo Builders* (privately printed, 1931); and J. L. Allhands, *Uriah Lott: Dauntless Pioneer and Man of Vision* (Houston: St. Clair Publishing Co., 1947).

87. Grenville M. Dodge, *How We Built the Union Pacific Railway* (Council Bluffs, IA: Monarch Printing Company, [c. 1911–1914], reprinted in Denver, CO, by Sage Books, 1965). See also Bain, *Empire Express*.

88. Klein, *Union Pacific*, 2:26–29. Mention should also be made of Henry Varnum Poor who

in the mid–nineteenth century first critically compiled, analyzed, and published information about American railways of interest to stockholders, brokers, and investment banks. See also note 78 citing works by Bryant, Grant, Hofsommer, Martin, and Overton.

89. This rebuilding and prosperity required the abandonment of thousands of miles of unprofitable branch lines and the eradication of much of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century railway infrastructure. The number of “ghost towns” on the Great Plains has grown accordingly. On twentieth-century railways in the United States, see Richard Saunders Jr., *Merging Lines: American Railroads, 1900–1970* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2001); and Richard Saunders Jr., *Main Lines: Rebirth of the North American Railroads, 1970–2002* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003).

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