

Series: "With the Giants leading 2-1, the Yankees won the next four contests to take the Series in six" (p. 179). Another minor issue with the book is with its indexing. Several names that appear multiple times in the text are omitted from the index.

The name Johnny Mize does not carry the same weight today as several other mid-twentieth-century diamond stars, such as Joe DiMaggio, Ted Williams, and Stan Musial. But for much of his career, Mize delivered the same level of elite batting production as his more famous contemporaries. His hitting accomplishments should have netted him at least two MVP Awards and a much earlier trip to Cooperstown. In *Big Cat*, Grillo provides readers with a well-written, absorbing biography that is worthy of the dominant slugger it portrays.

*Kent Krause*

*Independent Scholar*

***Twenty Acres: A Seventies Childhood in the Woods.*** By Sarah Neidhardt (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2023). xv + 284 pp. Illustrations. Notes. Index. \$29.95, paper.

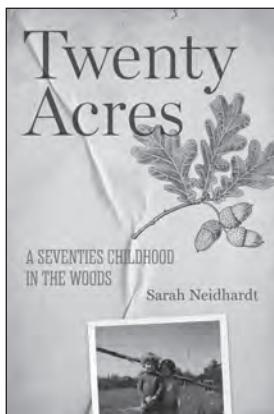
Since the publication of Jeffrey Jacob's *New Pioneers: The Back-to-the-Land Movement and the Search for a Sustainable Future* in 1997, there has been a slow but steady expansion of scholarship examining those Americans attempting self-sufficiency on rural homesteads and communes in the late twentieth century. Although popular interest in going "back-to-the-land" (BTTL) has roots in the late nineteenth century, the modern impulse grew from the social, political, and economic upheavals of the post-Sixties era. With important exceptions, this phase consisted of middle- to upper-class white young adults from suburban or urban areas who migrated to places with cheap land, including the Ozark Mountains.

Memoirs have played a small but important role in shaping scholarly and popular understanding of this trend. Works by Raymond Mungo, Roberta Price, and, more recently, Paul Salstrom

explore the motives, goals, triumphs, and challenges that back-to-the-landers faced. Sarah Neidhardt's *Twenty Acres*, however, is one of the first memoirs published by a child of homesteaders; therefore it offers a distinct perspective. Her work complements other projects by countercultural children, including a scholarly yet celebratory study by Jared Phillips, *Hipbillies* (2019), and a more critical documentary, *American Commune* (2020), produced by two women raised on The Farm in Tennessee. More like the film, Neidhardt's work reflects her own ambivalence toward her parents' lifestyle. Like many children of the counterculture, she appreciates the freedoms that the BTTL movement provided but struggles to reconcile certain issues from her youth, such as her parents' voluntary poverty despite their affluent backgrounds.

Neidhardt's account of her upbringing reflects many of the characteristics common to the BTTL movement. In 1973 her parents migrated to the Arkansas Ozarks from Colorado, leaving behind their blueblood origins to "escape the inertia of a bourgeois existence" (p. 35). The couple believed, like so many others, that they could live completely off the land despite their backgrounds. Nevertheless, true self-sufficiency proved elusive. Neidhardt's father sought off-farm jobs to pay for vehicles and to provide for his growing family. Her mother remained at home to raise children, cook, and garden—joyful tasks in the beginning before the lack of indoor plumbing, safe housing, reliable transportation, and modern appliances began to take their toll. By the early 1980s, the stress of navigating social isolation, poor schools, and lack of access to health care compelled the family to reenter the economic mainstream. They relocated to a town, sought college degrees and gainful employment, and eventually left the state altogether.

Still, Neidhardt does more than repeat the standard BTTL narrative. Along with her own recollections, she utilizes an abundance of primary resources, such as letters between her mother and grandmother, her parents' tape recordings, photo-



graphs, and notes from conversations with her parents, to reconstruct her childhood and parents' relationship. By so doing, Neidhardt avoids the trap of romanticizing her parents' experience. Class and gender emerge as salient themes. She frequently reminds readers that in no way did the voluntary poverty of her parents match the generational poverty of her Ozark neighbors. Neidhardt acknowledges that she and her family personally benefited from gifts of books, toys, and money, along with connections to the outside world that her grandparents provided, in ways unavailable to her local schoolmates. She also writes frankly about her parents' reliance upon welfare, which she finds troubling but recognizes as "just another cliché of the counterculture" (p. 93).

Another major contribution is Neidhardt's documentation of gender relations. Despite her parents' delusions about the BTTL lifestyle as egalitarian, they carried patriarchy with them to the homestead, with disastrous results. For example, the author's mother, far more pragmatic than her idealistic father, recognized immediately after arriving in Arkansas the challenges they faced. The mother recalled a conversation with her father during which she claimed she did not "see how people like us who know almost nothing about farming can live off the land when all these people around us have been trying for a lifetime and still can't do it" (p. 72). The father responded hostilely to this intrusion on his agrarian dream. Neidhardt's mother's lack of willingness to further challenge her father's vision fostered resentment, contributing to their eventual departure from the land and divorce.

Given her consideration of class and gender relations, Neidhardt's memoir stands to make an important contribution to these relatively understudied aspects of the BTTL movement. While the work says very little about race—except where Neidhardt offers frank recollections of her parents' tacit acceptance of locals' racism—it provides evidence to suggest that the movement, although environmentally progressive, harbored conservative elements. By not glorifying the

BTTL movement, *Twenty Acres* will help scholars consider harder questions about the complicated legacy of affluent whites who sought out voluntary simplicity for self-actualization as much as social reform.

Jinny Turman  
University of Virginia's College at Wise

***Ascent to Power: How Truman Emerged from Roosevelt's Shadow and Remade the World.*** By David L. Roll (New York: Dutton/Penguin Random House, 2024). xi + 530 pp. Illustrations. Selected Bibliography. Notes. Index. \$44.00, cloth; \$18.99, ebook.

Harry S. Truman was, as the old adage goes, an "accidental president." He was also, in many ways, an unlikely and unpopular selection to be Franklin Roosevelt's vice-presidential nominee

at the 1944 Democratic National Convention. Just eighty-two days later, he found himself sitting in the Oval Office. As most everyone knows, Truman would face a bewildering array of perilous challenges, then preside over one of the most consequential and successful presidencies in history. David L. Roll tells that extraordinary story, one that Hollywood could not script.

Although the details of Truman's political career and the momentous decisions he made—

dropping the atomic bomb, presiding over the end of World War II and rebuilding of Europe, the creation of the United Nations and NATO, the Berlin Airlift, civil rights, and so much more—are well known, Roll treats us to an intimate account of Truman's character and decision-making process, as well as the details of his handling of so many triumphal moments and political setbacks.

Along the way, Roll offers fascinating insights into how Truman managed to become a leader in his own right, despite following the enormously popular Roosevelt. Truman not only managed to emerge from Roosevelt's formidable shadow, but in several ways surpassed the great president who presided over the Great Depression and Second

