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Tom Lee. *The Tennessee-Virginia Tri-Cities: Urbanization in Appalachia, 1900-1950.* Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2005. 480 pp. $42.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-57233-334-5.

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The Transformation of Appalachia: Northeast Tennessee's and Southwest Virginia's Urbanization in the Early Twentieth Century

Tom Lee, a northeastern Tennessean and southern scholar, discusses the transformation of his native region during the early twentieth century in his 2005 monograph, *The Tennessee-Virginia Tri-Cities*. Lee explores the question of whether Appalachia is distinct from the South and whether twentieth-century Appalachia, and subsequently the New South, maintained the continuity of the nineteenth century. Lee addresses the large historiographic debates in both the southern and Appalachian fields, including the implications of industrialization, urbanization, urban planning, and southern progressivism on the region. This study focuses on the "Tri-Cities"–Johnson City, Kingsport, and Bristol. Lee chronicles the Tri-Cities' urbanization, focusing on how by the 1950s the area had moved from an economy dominated by subsistence rural agricultural supplemented by extractive industries to one subsumed by manufacturing. His research centers on such questions as how this transformation occurred, who necessitated the change, how urbanization and industrialization worked together, and what were the modern repercussions.

The term "urban ethos" is central to the study; Lee relies on southern historian Blaine Brownell's definition, which Lee specifically adapts to the Tri-Cities. He defines it as the communal spirit that advocated for an economy based on manufacturing and urbanization. Lee argues that commercial civic elites' invoked the urban ethos and promoted manufacturing at the expense of the rural population, a legacy that continued beyond the 1950s. This monograph also examines the issue of southern continuity with Lee taking a Woodwardian approach and arguing that the Tri-Cities, a region of the South, experienced major discontinuity during the early twentieth century. Civic boosters, at that point, sought to urbanize the region through the capitalization of manufacturing and the region's surplus of low wage and unskilled labor, creating a prolonged regional industrial dependence.

Northeastern Tennessee's mountainous geography largely prohibited effective transportation avenues throughout the nineteenth century. Lee finds that northeastern Tennesseans' inability to ship surplus goods to larger markets created a closed market system based on subsistence agriculture. Nineteenth-century Appalachians practiced safety-first farming, which provided autonomy. By the onslaught of the Civil War, railroads began to infiltrate the region, particularly the East Tennessee and Virginia line, allowing for commercial access to outside markets. Industries that revolved around indigenous natural resources developed. Lee argues that during this period rural farmers supplemented their seasonal income through employment in the extractive industries. He determines that, as long as industry had existed within Appalachia, rural farmers had participated in it, yet the totality in which farmers participated increased throughout time.

Lee argues that the Tri-Cities' "commercial civic elite," another term conceptualized by Brownell, maintained the region's urban ethos, a communal desire to integrate industry within the region (p. 55). Individuals, such as Kingsport's J. Fred Johnson and Alfred Dennis, were instrumental in Kingsport's city planning and promotion of industry. The city planning that was commonplace within the Tri-Cities reflected the ideas of southern progressivism, which inculcated middle-class ideas of efficiency and orderliness while diminishing racial equality. Lee argues that the commercial civic elites' desire to seek profit through industry transformed the secluded Appalachia.

Lee clearly maintains that the commercial civic elite acknowledged that for manufacturing to thrive the rural community had to embrace industrialization. The commercial civic elite and manufacturers implemented a phi-

losophy of "humanics," which sought to appease workers with regular pay, opportunities for property ownership, and economic support to religious institutions. Lee determines that humanics led to the successful continuation of the urban ethos and the implementation of manufacturing. "So intertwined were the civic and business interests of Kingsport," he maintains, "that 'humanics' indeed became the business of the people and a model expression of the urban ethos" (p. 121). The Appalachian elite further invoked racism and nativism in both the workplace and urban planning. They ensured worker loyalty through a philosophy of humanics and enticed big business through claims of a surplus of unskilled and low wage labor that would not unionize. By the 1930s, such claims of economically advantageous labor pools brought large numbers of manufacturing plants to the Tri-Cities, such as lumber pulp, hosiery, and rayon plants. Labor unrest grew by the close of World War I when temporary wage increases collapsed and wages fell below prewar levels. Lee points to the wage differential in Elizabethton, a small community adjacent to the Tri-Cities, and its Bemberg and Glanzstoff plants, and the subsequent failed strike at Glanzstoff to demonstrate the rise of labor unrest in the Tri-Cities. He presents a paradox, arguing that the commercial civic elite lured manufacturing with unskilled and cheap labor, but the presence of manufacturing created a modern labor force that strove for increased wages and representation.

The Great Depression and New Deal programs, such as the Agricultural Adjustment Act, Civilian Conservation Corps, and the Fair Labor Standards Act, threatened to increase wages, diminish business recruitment, and return industrial laborers back to agriculture. Yet, Lee argues that the commercial civic elite utilized government grants and programs to urbanize the Tri-Cities even more, which in turn, brought laborers back into the cities with a variety of employment opportunities. He uses government documents to demonstrate how government capital increased urbanization in the area. The Tri-Cities' reliance on the government continued throughout World War II when the commercial civic elite lured government contracts to the area providing further industrial employment. Lee argues that the Tri-Cities, by the 1950s, were urban communities characterized by "industrial recruitment, manufacturing employment, and planned development" (p. 221). He concludes that the commercial civic elite shaped the region, causing the inhabitants to rely on industrial wages, a factor that would later damage community as manufacturing rescinded. Lee finds that "if there has been a common theme in the story of the Tri-Cities area, it has been the power of a set of businessmen, professionals, and civic leaders to define a vision for the entire area" (p. 267).

Lee's work is valuable to southern and Appalachian historiography because it focuses not on Appalachia's otherness, which usually emphasizes its overwhelmingly rural population, but instead examines Appalachia's urban population. He acknowledges this distinction, finding that much of Appalachian historiography has "treated [urban Appalachian cities] solely within the context of southern history" (p. 18). While this monograph correctly moves beyond a fixation of the otherness of Appalachians it also does not limit itself to a discussion of the Appalachian elite, but includes rural workers, particularly the experience of African Americans and women. Unfortunately, much of Lee's manuscript sources are from the local elite, a problem most likely indicative of a dearth of sources, yet he effectively supplements this inadequacy with regional interviews. Lee's work, while regional in its focus, clearly demonstrates that urban Appalachia is not an anomaly but one born of the unique regional factors.

The Tennessee-Virginia Tri-Cities emits a sense of nostalgia in its pages by continually discussing the exploitation of its rural unskilled populace first by extractive industries and later by commercial civic elites and manufacturers. This can be directly observed in Lee's introduction when he states that the work is "an effort to understand the changes and choices that brought about the Tri-Cities I knew and the Tri-Cities of today" (p. xiii). At the conclusion of the book, a sense that northeastern Tennessee had been destroyed by the conspiring commercial civic elite and manufacturers as well as a longing for the seclusion of the nineteenth century is observed. Lee maintains a theme of exploitation beginning with extractive industries and ending with a southern population that was subjected to low wages and an inability to unionize. Ultimately, this work provides a detailed interpretation of the Tri-Cities, which weaves together a political, social, and economic narrative that reveals how rural Appalachia transformed into a largely urban region characterized by manufacturing, much like the South.

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