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Mardo Williams. *Maude (1883-1993): She Grew Up with the Country.* New York: Calliope Press, 1996. iii + 335 pp. $22.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-9649241-2-3.

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From Buggies to Spaceships: One Ohio Woman's Journey Through the Twentieth Century

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In *Maude (1883-1993): She Grew Up with the Country*, Mardo Williams provides readers with a history of his mother's long life. Although Maude Williams lived for 110 years, the most detailed information on her life comes from the first four decades of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, *Maude* allows readers to see life through the eyes of a rural farming family, as well as the tremendous changes that these people endured as agriculture and life in general became more technologically advanced during the twentieth century.

Maude Allen Williams was born in Fayette County, Ohio, in 1883. At four years of age, Maude and her family moved to Ridgeway in Hardin County, Ohio. She attended one-room schoolhouses and even attained her high school diploma–the first person in her family to do so. Less than a year later, on February 25, 1903, Maude Allen married Lee Williams. Their marriage lasted fifty-four years, until Lee's death in 1957. For the duration of their marriage, the couple resided on a farm three miles from Mt. Victory, also located in Hardin County. They led a hard life, but together they overcame the obstacles that arose before them. They ably provided for themselves in the most difficult of times and always had ample food and clothing for their four children, with the first child being conceived before their wedding day. Mardo Williams speculates that his parents, by conceiving a child, hoped to escape from the control of their parents and, in the case of Lee Williams, to leave Ohio Wesleyan University to become a farmer. Upon Lee Williams's death, Maude Williams tried to maintain the farm, but it proved to be too difficult a proposition for her. In 1960, she moved to Kenton, Ohio. Eventually, she entered various nursing homes, dying on November 26, 1993.

Maude is a great account of the struggles that small Ohio farmers faced during the first half of the twentieth century. Mardo Williams's writing style makes it easy for the reader to visualize the various tasks that such people faced during this era. Butchering the pigs, plowing the fields, scrubbing the windows, and canning come vividly to life in this account. Mardo Williams also provides countless examples of more restful activities, including swimming in the creek, taking sleigh rides, or going to town to watch a movie projected onto the side of one of the buildings–the predecessor to drive-in movies. Perhaps the greatest strength of the book is that it shows changes over time. From riding to school in the school buggy to school busses, from horse-drawn carriages to automobiles and airplanes, from the outhouse to indoor plumbing, the reader sees the dramatic changes that occurred during the twentieth century in the United States.

Maude is an excellent book to assign to a survey class in modern U.S. history. Unfortunately, such courses, due to time constraints, usually require the instructor to focus on the big names and events of the particular historical era. *Maude* reminds students that the actions of men, like Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Henry Ford, and Kaiser Wilhelm, and women, like Eleanor Roosevelt and Rosa Parks, affected more ordinary people who are often absent from these types of courses. Maude Williams's life shows us that history is personal. It is not some obtuse force that only affects prominent men and women. Government programs like the New Deal, although it helped many struggling Americans, caused others to become despondent because they had to seek assistance. In the case of Maude Williams's brother-in-law, he committed suicide rather than appearing, in his mind, as a failure to his friends and family by participating in the Works Progress Administration. *Maude* provides a human face to history.

Although *Maude* reminds the reader that historical events influence the lives of all types of people, several shortcomings and limitations exist with this book. It is a relatively narrow account of life in the United States dur-

ing the twentieth century. It does not provide a clear picture of urban life. African Americans, Native Americans, and other minority groups are, for the most part, missing from this account. This work does provide great insight into farm life, but one must remember that the conditions that farmers faced in Ohio were very different from those that people residing further west endured, especially during the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl. Perhaps the greatest limitation is the sentimentalism that Mardo Williams uses to describe his mother. Maude Williams can do no wrong in this account. She perseveres against all difficulties. She overcomes all obstacles. This work leaves the reader wondering if Maude Williams was representative of other farming women during this time period or a superwoman.

These weaknesses aside, this book does provide tremendous insight into the lives of a Midwestern farming family during the twentieth century. It does an excellent job showing how wider events such as World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II influenced ordinary Americans. It also illustrates the innumerable changes that occurred during the twentieth century and how those changes forever altered life for one Ohio family.

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