Landlord William Scully

Socolofsky, Homer E.

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This biography of William Scully presents a full picture of the investment and land-management activities of one of the most important figures in American agricultural history. An Irishman who first came to the United States in 1850, Scully eventually built up holdings amounting to almost a quarter million acres of the richest prairie and farm lands in Illinois, Nebraska, Kansas, and Missouri. This vast land empire, which was worked by some fifteen hundred tenant farmers, wearied for Scully the reputation of being America’s greatest landlord—this despite the fact that he remained an alien until the last decade of his life. Although Scully’s activities often provoked violent criticism, his fortune grew to more than fifteen million dollars before his death in 1906.

“This is a significant work that contributes very importantly to our knowledge of the agricultural history of the Midwest.”

Harry N. Schreiber, University of California, San Diego

“No one else has done for Scully or for any other of America’s great landlords what Socolofsky has accomplished. This is an admirable study.”

Paul W. Gates, Cornell University

Homer E. Socolofsky, professor of history at Kansas State University, was the author of Arthur Capper: Publisher, Politician, Philanthropist and The Cimarron Valley, and coauthor of the Historical Atlas of Kansas. He served as president of both the Agricultural History Society and the Kansas State Historical Society, and his articles have appeared in the Western Historical Quarterly, Agricultural History, The Midwest Quarterly, Journal of the West, Nebraska History, and the Kansas Historical Quarterly, among others.

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