



The Transformation of Old Age Security: Class and Politics in the American Welfare State

Jill Quadagno

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Why did the United States lag behind Germany, Britain, and Sweden in adopting a national plan for the elderly? When the Social Security Act was finally enacted in 1935, why did it depend on a class-based double standard? Why is old age welfare in the United States still less comprehensive than its European counterparts? In this sophisticated analytical chronicle of one hundred years of American welfare history, Jill Quadagno explores the curious birth of old age assistance in the United States. Grounded in historical research and informed by social science theory, the study reveals how public assistance grew from colonial-era poor laws, locally financed and administered, into a massive federal bureaucracy.

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