

more extensively. Much more satisfying is Floyd's treatment of non-written texts: her analyses of nineteenth-century paintings depicting pioneer women are nuanced and evocative. Paintings showing pioneer women as imperial mothers and as dough-covered kitchen workers support her argument that the pioneer woman was a popular, powerful, and changeable figure in the transnational imagination.

Floyd's most important contribution to scholarship on the writers of the prairie Midwest is her insistence that these writers tell us about more than the daily trials and tribulations of pioneer women in the limited confines of their homes or regions. Her analysis opens the door for more "regional" writers to be considered in national and international contexts, and as producers of new meanings for the seemingly mundane activities of women's housekeeping work. Comparing midwestern writers with their counterparts in Great Britain and Canada, Floyd emphasizes shared traits in writing about small towns and the experience of pioneering. Floyd shows that not only writers for international markets but also private diarists were aware that their work—both housework and writing-work—concealed truths about the realities of their lives even as it constituted their role in a much larger historical process of settlement.

Ham, Eggs, and Corn Cake: A Nebraska Territory Diary, by Erastus F. Beadle. Introduction by Ronald C. Naugle. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001. xxiv, 130 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, index. \$12.95 paper.

Reviewer Ryan Roenfeld is a museum guide at the State Historical Society of Iowa's Western Historic Trails Center in Council Bluffs. His primary interests relate to various developments in the Missouri River valley.

Of all the characters who headed West during the 1850s, among the most common—and most colorful—were the hordes of land speculators. Dreaming of riches and armed with a surveyor's plat, land agents founded many towns on the open prairies, confident that their town would become a metropolis. Such dreams motivated New Yorker Erastus Beadle, who set out for Nebraska Territory in early 1857. During the six months he spent in Omaha, he kept a diary describing his experiences as a promoter of the Saratoga Land Company and his failed attempts as a homesteader. In the end, he found neither fortune nor new life for his family. He returned east just as the Panic of 1857 brought down a Missouri River economy based on hope and "wild-cat" banks.

Nevertheless, Beadle went on to shape much of the American idea of the mythic West as part of the publishing house of Beadle & Adams, which over the succeeding decades released a series of dime novels

mass-produced for a public eager for romanticized escapades of heroic cowboys, distressed damsels, and nefarious Indians. Eventually those novels provided plots for countless Hollywood "oat operas" and early television shows.

What makes Beadle's western diary of interest today is its descriptions of the western reality of choking dust clouds, lynch law, homesickness, and hot days when the arrival of a steamboat was the height of entertainment. One can only guess how much of Beadle's real-life experiences found their way into the idealized West he would help create.

America–America Letters: A Norwegian-American Family Correspondence, compiled and edited by Bjorn Gunnar Ostgard. Northfield, MN: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 2001. xxxii, 161 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$24.95 cloth.

Reviewer James S. Hamre is emeritus professor of religion and philosophy at Waldorf College. His research and publications have dealt with religious and educational developments among Norwegian immigrants.

With this volume, the Norwegian-American Historical Association (NAHA) introduces a third category in its treatment of the genre of immigrant letters. It distinguishes "America–America letters" from the earlier "America letters" (correspondence sent by immigrants to persons in Norway) and "Norway letters" (letters flowing from Norway to America). The category of "America–America letters" refers to the correspondence carried on by immigrants among themselves in their new homeland. The publication under consideration grew out of recent efforts by the NAHA to compile and organize such letters.

The book focuses on the letters of one family, that of Knud S. and Mary L. Aaker, who emigrated to America in 1845 and settled initially in Dane County, Wisconsin, before establishing a more permanent residence in Goodhue County, Minnesota. The 78 letters in the volume, which have been translated into English and briefly annotated, are arranged in three chapters. Chapter one contains 10 exchanges, from 1847 to 1869, between Knud Aaker and several of his children. Chapter two, containing 42 letters written during the Civil War period (1861–1865), consists primarily of correspondence between Anne, the widowed daughter-in-law of Knud and Mary Aaker, and two of her children: Andreas, a student at Luther College in Decorah who later enlisted in the Union army and died of disease in Tennessee; and Mari, a daughter who worked in Red Wing, Minnesota, for a while. Chapter three, 26 letters from the years 1859–1894, includes the correspondence

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