

The Upper Mississippi Valley: How the Landscape Shaped Our Heritage, by William J. Burke. Waukon, IA: Mississippi Valley Press, 2000. xv, 298 pp. Illustrations, maps. \$25.00 paper.

Reviewer Patrick Nunnally is a consultant whose work focuses on the history and landscapes of the upper Mississippi valley.

William J. Burke's highly detailed volume is a nice addition to the growing body of work on the history, culture, and landscape of the upper Mississippi River. Long overshadowed by the more famous portion of the river south of Cairo, the upper Mississippi has recently come into its own as a landscape with a distinctive and important history and sense of place. Burke details that history and shows how historical processes have created a particular sense of place by focusing on the stretch of river in far northeastern Iowa, in Allamakee and Clayton Counties. His subject is always the landscape itself, the organization of space, the particular inscriptions left by previous inhabitants, and how the place we have now came to look and feel the way it does. This is not a scholarly book in the sense that it offers new theoretical insights into what it means for landscape to shape culture, but it is a series of detailed examinations of a particular place and what that place feels like.

Burke's book exemplifies much that is praiseworthy about local history. He has seemingly read everything on the relatively small stretch of the river that he calls home, and has dug up every map of it. Moreover, he can fit the pieces into larger historical frameworks, discussing how the Old Military Road was an important element in the broader pattern of populating the trans-Mississippi frontier. His knowledge of the area is enriched by the fact that his family has lived there for generations. With some subjects, this close association would be a problematical compromise of historical objectivity, but in Burke's case intimate knowledge allows for a discussion that contains more than can be offered strictly through documentary sources. Landscapes are not books—they are to be lived in, not just "read"—and Burke has clearly lived in and with his landscape well enough to tell his readers precisely how it came to be the way it is.

Concepts such as *place*, *landscape*, and *heritage* are increasingly important in scholarship as well as in various professional practices, such as heritage tourism, historic preservation, and interpretation. This book clearly illustrates both the strengths and the limitations that follow from trying to write a detailed, close analysis of a particular landscape. On one hand, Burke knows his territory so well, and has thought so much about what the particular components on the landscape mean beyond their immediate context, that he really does give us "the world

in a grain of sand." On the other hand, a "place-based" approach to study means that he has to address subjects across a very wide spectrum of specialties. The problem is that he may not be as "accurate" as some specialists demand, while at the same time providing more analysis and details than general readers may want. Here is the real difficulty of doing work like this that is neither heavily documented academic scholarship nor glibly written narrative. Burke addresses both a public and an academic audience, but the result sometimes leaves readers wanting to know his sources.

At its best, writing like Burke's continues the landscape writing tradition exemplified by John Brinkerhoff Jackson and Britain's W. G. Hoskins and makes concrete the theoretical insights of environmental historians such as William Cronon. Burke's volume, while not reaching those heights, is a good book—despite its annoying need for a proofreader—that we can hope will inspire similar close looks at the landscape we live in and have created.

The Rise of the Agricultural Welfare State: Institutions and Interest Group Power in the United States, France, and Japan, by Adam D. Sheingate. Princeton Studies in American Politics. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000. xii, 279 pp. Tables, graphs, notes, bibliography, index. \$49.95 cloth.

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Adam Sheingate is out to "test propositions" (xi). For two decades, political scientists have been holding forth on the failure of federal governmental institutions to effectively address national social and economic problems. Many have concluded that American economic and social problems persist because of an absence of "state capacity," or a national bureaucratic apparatus so enfeebled that decisive government action is impossible. Since government institutions are weak, some argue, interest groups have undue influence over the development of federal policy. Sheingate tests these notions in the context of farm policy in the United States, France, and Japan.

In Sheingate's view, American farm policy is an exception to these propositions. He concludes that the federal machinery that manages farm programs in the United States is quite sophisticated and that agricultural interest groups do not control the policy-making process. Such conclusions constitute an "important challenge to how we un-

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