

information about the time, place, and photographic projects, but not too much.

The only exception to this generalization is the editor's failure to provide any clues about how she selected the photographs for the volume. Historians would want to know how many photographs made up the original collection and why she picked the images included in the book and not others. What themes did she hope to illustrate with this highly diverse collection of pictures? What is the relationship between the pictures of the impoverished farm children of the 1930s and those of African-American cavalymen at Fort Riley during World War II?

Most important, however, are the photographs themselves. They are beautifully reproduced and presented, and provide an excellent view of more than a decade of history. For those interested in life in the rural Midwest, the photographs, especially those by Arthur Rothstein, John Vachon, and Russell Lee, provide a particularly compelling visual record of life in that time and place. The government-sponsored photographic record of that era is an especially rich one and, as books like *Bust to Boom* are published, an increasingly accessible one.

Places of Quiet Beauty: Parks, Preserves, and Environmentalism, by Rebecca Conard. American Land and Life Series. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1997. ix, 382 pp. Illustrations, tables, notes, appendixes, bibliography, index. \$15.95 paper.

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Places of Quiet Beauty is a welcome addition to the growing historical literature in environmental history, the history of conservation, and the protection of landscapes. The book does not break new ground methodologically or theoretically, but it does make an important contribution to our understanding of an easily overlooked and critical subject, namely, state parks in the Midwest. Too often, the history of open space protection focuses on national agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service or the National Park Service, or describes the protection of spectacular landscapes in the western or northeastern parts of the country. This history of land protection in Iowa, a state where very little land is protected, offers valuable insights into twentieth-century environmental politics.

Conard is interested in the ideas of the park system, the shifting notions of what a park is and what it is for, and her book reflects this

focus strongly. The study is more or less conventional political history. She examines the evolution of the Iowa Conservation Commission, discusses key inaugural figures such as Thomas MacBride, Louis Pammel, and Jay N. "Ding" Darling, and describes the shifting allegiances and alliances among resource protection activists throughout the twentieth century.

Iowa's state park system got its legislated beginning in 1917, after two decades of agitation by park supporters and scientists. The alliance that formed the system—scientists, the Iowa Federation of Women's Clubs, foresters, local politicians, and civic leaders—almost immediately showed signs of strain, though. While some saw the system as conservation-centered, and focused on the protection of places with outstanding natural (and, to a lesser degree, human) history, others saw parks as more of a recreational resource. Added to this strain were different philosophical positions on the integration of resource management. Some activists saw the need to think holistically about land and water use, both within and outside the parks, while others saw environmental issues as more discrete and separable.

The formative period for the Iowa parks system, which lasted through the 1920s, is the most detailed part of the book. Conard describes in fine detail the dominant personalities, the political positions they took, and how allegiances shifted according to local political needs. The early years were also the strongest period for Iowa's park system, as its land acquisition and management considerably outstripped larger, more populous states. By 1931, on the eve of the Great Depression, Iowa had one of the strongest park systems in the nation. Its *Twenty-five Year Conservation Plan* set management direction for the next two decades, and a cadre of forceful leaders had emerged.

These circumstances were to prove fortuitous. As federal relief programs, particularly the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), poured federal money and local labor into the parks, Iowa's system was already equipped with a plan and an administrative structure to respond. Franklin D. Roosevelt is quoted as saying "Give Iowa all it wants" (136). The story of the CCC in Iowa parks has been told elsewhere, in historic resource surveys and "gray literature," but not so well, or in a manner that so clearly connects building projects to a broader political context.

After the depression and the hiatus of World War II, though, the Iowa system fell on hard times. A combination of circumstances in the 1950s initiated a decades-long period of stagnation. One of these, according to Conard's analysis, was the growing influence of fish

and game management in setting the direction for the Conservation Commission as a whole. Parks and reserves increasingly came to be seen as places that provided outdoor recreation. And ongoing controversies over water quality control sapped resources and political good will. Some visionary activity continued, however, notably Louise Lange Parker's leadership in historic preservation and Ada Hayden's work in prairie preservation.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the period that Conard describes as the "lightning rod" decades, the number of influences on the Conservation Commission increased, while its ability to respond did not. The Army Corps of Engineers claimed authority to build dams as it chose, regardless of the presence of state parks; local environmentalists fought for increased protection; and the old paradigm of fish and game management and increased opportunities for public recreation was not sufficient to solve the new problems. Conard describes recent management initiatives in her epilogue, but they are too recent for their full impact to be discerned.

There is an inherent structural difficulty in writing a study such as this. One can either focus on people, policies, and politics, as Conard has, showing how the park system evolved and changed, or one can attend more closely to actual changes on the ground and in the landscape. Conard pursues the latter strategy on occasion, giving good treatments of Backbone, Lacey-Keosauqua, and Ledges State Parks. But the book does not really give the reader a good sense of place. Conard does not devote many pages to the places that people spent so much time and political energy on, and readers do not get a good feel for what those places are and why they were the sources of such controversy. She wisely chose not to try to "cover" every park and reserve in the state, which would have led to a great deal of repetition. Still, the book would have been stronger if she had spent more time on important parks, using a modified sort of case study approach, showing how important political and policy trends affected the landscapes at particular places. The sections where Conard does illustrate politics by grounding it in the particulars of place are the book's strongest; more would have been better.

Of course, that would be a different book, but one that might appeal to a more public audience than this one may. This is an important book for scholars and teachers of Iowa history, environmental historians, and other academics whose work attends to the ways humans have inscribed cultural values on the landscape. We can look forward to the day when Conard writes a more popular history to join this well-crafted, well-researched study.

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