

Even more forcefully, McClelland is urging a return to the study of revolutions and discontinuities in history. Insisting that "cloud-bursts of innovations" and a "persistent rain of novel improvements, unthinkable in 1808, had become the norm by the middle of the 1830s," (219) McClelland challenges historians who take the longer view of innovation and change. Other scholars have argued that many rural Americans were unaffected by developments at the United States Patent Office and in the agricultural societies of Boston and Philadelphia. McClelland's central argument, on the other hand, is that the innovations of America's first agricultural revolution were more significant than the persistence of premodern techniques. McClelland also links these innovations with an emergent optimism about America's economic future and the new democratic spirit of the Jacksonian era. Yet for all his emphasis on changing attitudes and ideologies in the American countryside, it is striking that McClelland does not mention the extensive debate among scholars concerning the transition to capitalism. Implicitly, the text provides strong support for the "market revolution" school of early national historiography.

Although the text focuses on developments that preceded the agricultural settlement of midwestern prairies, the book is nonetheless important for those interested in Iowa history. The challenge for Iowa historians is to test his hypothesis for circumstances in the rural Midwest. All readers will profit from McClelland's clear discussion of the parameters and considerations that underlay agricultural technologies, and few books provide such well-illustrated and well-explained descriptions of agricultural implements. In sum, despite its somewhat idiosyncratic thesis, the book remains a solidly researched, well-illustrated, and most informative study of agricultural improvements in the early nineteenth century.

Prairie Voices: Iowa's Pioneering Women, by Glenda Riley. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1996. x, 299 pp. Illustrations, notes. \$24.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY ANNE B. WEBB, METROPOLITAN STATE UNIVERSITY

In Glenda Riley's *Prairie Voices*, the lives of early Iowa women ring out across a century and a half to reach us in our modern world. Women's own words report their triumphs and failures, their joys and fears, their pride in their work, and, above all, their zest for a life fully lived. Through diaries, memoirs, one interview, a collection of letters, and a report on Iowa's achieving women, Riley offers readers a banquet of firsthand accounts. The menu includes the trip west;

women's lives as pioneers, wives, and mothers; and the public contributions women made to their communities and the larger society. At times, the act of recording their stories was itself heroic; Amelia Murdock Wing dictated her memoirs at 92 years of age.

As early as 1839, Mary Ann Ferrin Davidson headed for Iowa with her husband and year-and-a-half-old son, going by river, first down the Ohio to St. Louis, then up the Mississippi to Keokuk. There they hired a teamster to take them 80 miles farther. The following spring they traveled over the trackless prairie to settle amid the Mesquakie Indians. Mary Ann was the only woman in the party. "I was fond of adventure," she explained. It took an adventurer to live alone with her small family through sickness and storms, close to a culture so different from her own.

At 13, barely a teenager, Mary Alice Shutes served as her family's recorder on their overland trip to Iowa. Because Mary spent most of the day on horseback, her mother kept notes, and together in the evenings they wrote a diary, one of the freshest of the collection, the West seen through a young girl's eyes. Mary pictures for us the covered wagon with her uncle driving, she and her brother astride their horses keeping the cows moving, her father and mother in the surrey with the baby. Brother, father, and uncle stood watch by turns through the night, but "the rest of us rolled into our quilts with me under the covered wagon."

Like many women, Joanna Harris Haines loved the prairies. She wrote, "I shall remember as long as I live with unalloyed and inexpressible pleasure . . . the magnificence of the wild flowers that made the prairies for miles in all directions one gorgeous mass of variant beauty." However, Sarah Welch Nossaman reminds us that the frontier was not one uninterrupted paradise. "To say pioneer life is without its troubles even among neighbors is a mistake," she wrote, "for we had one neighbor that will never be forgotten by the old settlers." Both before and during the Civil War, trouble brewed as pioneer society, mirroring the nation, divided. The Underground Railroad ran through Iowa, putting at risk Joanna Harris Haines's family, who harbored escaped slaves. Lincoln and the war were too liberal for Iowa's Copperheads, who plotted treason behind closed doors. But Lincoln was not liberal enough for others; nothing short of a clear promise of emancipation would satisfy them.

As Iowa grew, the doors of opportunity opened for many women. In this collection, women write of their reform work in alcohol and child abuse, and of their Civil War work organizing relief, raising money, and creating and collecting supplies for Iowa's regi-

ments. They write also of a sister serving parishioners as a Unitarian minister, of a mother's medical work with her neighbors, of teachers, their study and work in Iowa's classrooms. The book closes with a report from Jennie McCowen, M.D., on Iowa's working women, who in 1885 topped 80,000. Most women worked in professional and personal services as teachers, seamstresses, domestics, and doctors, but others worked in agriculture, trade, and transportation, and almost 8,500 in manufacturing, milling, and mining.

Prairie Voices will hold a stellar place in the published collections of pioneer life. Almost without exception, each writer captures readers' imaginations, making them a close companion in the trials and rewards of pioneer life in Iowa. Credit for the success of the volume belongs both to the writers themselves and to Riley, who selected the best and then edited each work to bring into clear relief the internal and external voices of Iowa's women pioneers.

Mormon Midwife: The 1846-1888 Diaries of Patty Bartlett Sessions, edited by Donna Toland Smart. Life Writings of Frontier Women, volume 2. Logan: Utah State University Press, 1997. xiv, 457 pp. Illustrations, notes, appendixes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY BILOINE WHITING YOUNG, ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

Mormon Midwife contains the complete diaries of Mormondom's most famous midwife, elucidated by comprehensive notes and explanations by Donna Smart. Beginning in February 1846 and continuing until May 1888, Patty Sessions, a compulsive record keeper, wrote daily entries in her diaries. Those diaries cover the Mormon exodus from Nauvoo, the trek across Iowa in the middle of winter, life in Winter Quarters at Florence, Nebraska, the journey across the plains to Utah, and the early years of pioneer life in Salt Lake City.

It is hard to imagine a better person to have kept a diary of those years and events. Patty Sessions was deeply involved in the events unfolding around her. First a midwife, delivering babies weekly, she was active in Mormon women's societies, speaking in tongues, and bestowing blessings. She doctored the sick with herbal remedies, supported herself through a variety of astute business activities during her husband's long absences with his other wives, and had contact with almost every person of note in early Mormondom, the names of whom she recorded in her diaries.

Her record is straightforward and factual. "23 monday we got canvas for a tent sewed some on it 24 tuesday stormed all day fin-

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.