

of Missouri Press, 2012. x, 171 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$30.00 hardcover.

Reviewer Victoria Smith is associate professor of history and ethnic studies at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. She is the author of *Captive Arizona: Indian Captives and Captive Indians in Territorial Arizona, 1850–1912* (2009).

At the academic level, this book engages several lines of inquiry. It explores the life of Mary Alicia Owen, a Vassar-educated folklorist, and her sisters Ella, a geologist, and Juliette, an artist and ornithologist. All three unmarried academic females called St. Joseph, Missouri, home their entire lives during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The author, Greg Olson, examines the published folklore and fiction of Mary Owen and places her in the context of the academic struggle between folklore as anthropology and folklore as literature. He also connects the upper-class Owen family to the history of St. Joseph and explores the society that fashioned their lives.

Iowans, especially those interested in river towns born as ports of departure for an expanding American West, will find in Owen's life and work archetypes for their own historical pioneers: a wealthy, educated, and influential unmarried woman suspended between her privileged upbringing and an insatiable curiosity about the characters that peopled her world; the displaced natives, bereft of homelands, never quite sure if the land they lived on was really theirs; African American elders in their shantytowns, caught between the antebellum slavery of their youth and the marginal freedom of emancipation; and tales of encounters with Romani gypsies who wandered the frontier river towns of the American West. Owen interacted with them all, yet carefully maintained the class and racial boundaries that separated her from her subjects. Despite determination and an inquisitive mind, Owen could never quite surmount the social perceptions that bound her.

The Farmers' Game: Baseball in Rural America, by David Vaught. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013. xi, 214 pp. Illustrations, notes, essay on sources, index. \$29.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Benjamin G. Rader is James L. Sellers Professor of History Emeritus at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. He is the author of *Baseball: A History of America's Game* (1992; 3rd ed., 2008).

The history of baseball in America has been told almost exclusively as a city and as a professional game. David Vaught seeks to rectify this lacunae by offering a history of rural baseball—the game played by farmers and the residents of small towns. The supremacy of the city game's history arose in part, Vaught contends, from the effort of base-

ball scholars to demolish the myth of the game's origins in the countryside, in the tiny, bucolic town of Cooperstown, New York. In doing so they neglected to examine the widespread playing of baseball-like games in the Cooperstown area during the antebellum era. Once they demonstrated the error of the Cooperstown legend, they proceeded to tell the remainder of baseball's history as if rural baseball hardly existed. No one can deny that the main historical focus has been urban and professional baseball, yet Vaught argues that rural imagery nonetheless occupies a huge place in our memory of the game. Simply witness the continuing popularity of the movie *Field of Dreams* (1989) or, for that matter, the epic poem "Casey at the Bat" (1888).

In seeking to redress the balance, Vaught offers a set of discrete essays that examine the game in specific places and at specific times. Much of *The Farmers' Game* concerns the sport's economic, social, and cultural context. Hence, the reader finds that baseball in early nineteenth-century Cooperstown intertwined with conflicts arising over the area's increased democratization; that the transition in the late nineteenth century from wheat to fruit farming touched off a "baseball epidemic" in the Putah Creek neighborhood of California; that the popularity of baseball in late nineteenth-century rural Texas can be attributed to the arrival of European immigrants and to the production of cotton; that the surfacing of superstar Bob Feller in Iowa in the 1930s is comprehensible in the context of the rise of the "modern American farmer"; that the decline in the popularity of baseball in southwestern Minnesota corresponded to the decay of its small towns after World War II; and that Gaylord Perry's rise to stardom in the 1960s and 1970s can be understood as a "case study of a quintessentially southern, authentically rural icon of popular culture" (125).

Vaught's chapter "The Making of Bob Feller and the Modern American Farmer" is of special interest to Iowans. Unlike previous accounts of Feller, Vaught carefully reexamines the "farm-boy-makes-good" narrative, one promoted by William Feller (Bob's father) and by Bob himself. According to this myth, the Fellers were traditional rural folk whose loyalty to agrarian ideals propelled Bob into baseball stardom. Instead, based on research in local land and court records and newspaper reports, Vaught finds that William Feller was an exceptionally shrewd and successful "modern" farmer. He made smart business decisions—such as when and how much to invest in land and equipment and when to plant wheat rather than corn. William likewise went about systematically preparing his son for a career in professional baseball. Indeed, William even built Bob his own baseball field, the equivalent of the "Field of Dreams," and Bob himself was

almost as good at baseball entrepreneurship as he was at throwing the "heater."

For those interested in baseball's place in local history, whether in rural or regional terms, this is an extraordinarily good book. Vaught's narrative rests on an enormous amount of research in primary sources, including records found in county courthouses and stories in small-town newspapers, as well as on published secondary accounts. Well written and researched, it offers a convincing set of stories about the role of baseball in the history of the American countryside.

The Missile Next Door: The Minuteman in the American Heartland, by Gretchen Heefner. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012. 294 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$35.00 hardcover.

Reviewer Jenny Barker Devine is assistant professor of history at Illinois College. She is the author of "The Farmer and the Atom: The Iowa State Cooperative Extension Service and Rural Civil Defense, 1955–1970" in the *Annals of Iowa* (2007).

Histories of the arms race during the Cold War typically focus on the technological, scientific, or military aspects of atomic weapons. In *The Missile Next Door*, historian Gretchen Heefner offers an intriguing new take on how ordinary citizens in the Midwest interacted with missile installations on their farms and ranches. Based largely on oral histories with South Dakota ranchers and activists, a lively and engaging narrative provides an intensely human account of daily life alongside weapons of mass destruction. As policymakers designed ever more destructive weapons, those who housed the missiles on their land did not necessarily protest the rationality of the arms race, but they did express deep concerns about their rights and freedoms, the environment, and the viability of the agricultural economy.

During the late 1950s, the Eisenhower administration adopted the concept of "mutually assured destruction," or the deterrence of war through a buildup of atomic weapons. When intercontinental ballistic missiles became the weapon of choice, policymakers came to believe that the Soviets would be deterred from attacking the United States by distributing thousands of missile installations staggered throughout the American countryside rather than concentrating missiles in one vulnerable area. Senators and state boosters vied for these installations in their home states in order to reap the economic benefits, leading the air force to favor prevailing political winds over geography when selecting missile sites.

Residents of small towns and even larger urban centers welcomed military spending as a much-needed boost to the local economy. In