

postmaster general, a station much more befitting his opinion of himself. As a result, Holt's political allegiance to the Union ultimately was secured when, as one of the last men left standing in the lame-duck Buchanan administration during the winter of 1861, he was appointed as secretary of war. From that unenviable position he could do little more than witness the fragmentation of the Union firsthand.

Leonard presents Holt's biography in a traditional, chronological fashion, connecting his personal episodes to the larger political narrative of national crisis. Her work is well researched and informative. She fleshes out her portrait by augmenting evidence from Holt's personal correspondence with an abundance of writings from family members and colleagues. Due praise aside, there are some missed opportunities. Holt's relationship to slavery is not explained satisfactorily given its importance. Leonard documents his ambivalence, perhaps suggesting more of an antislavery tendency than the evidence warrants, but little mention is made of his own experiences as a slaveholder, including an inadequate explanation of when the slaves he owned were emancipated. More seriously, despite Holt's achievements as the chief arbiter of military law, Leonard shies away from the subject of Holt and the law. Absent is any discussion of Holt's legal theory or understanding of the law. Indeed, it appears simply as a career, a way to make one's way in the world. Given the role that Holt played in enforcing and adjudicating issues of confiscation, emancipation, and racial justice, this oversight is significant. Occasional references to correspondence with Francis Lieber, a noted law reformer and author of a code of instructions for military conduct, only whet the appetite for a more thorough analysis. The Civil War represented the ultimate repudiation of English common law forms and actions and their replacement with a new foundation of jurisprudence. Holt appears to have played a significant role in that transformation, but any such contribution eludes the scope of Leonard's biography. These reservations notwithstanding, Professor Leonard has contributed another innovative book to her repertoire. It suggests that we still have much more to learn about the Civil War.

*For the Love of Pete: An Orphan Train Story*, by Ethel Barker. North Liberty: Ice Cube Press, 2012. 275 pp. Illustrations, author's note. \$19.95 paper.

Reviewer Millie K. Frese is the education and outreach manager at the State Historical Museum of Iowa. As the former editor of the *Goldfinch*, the State Historical Society of Iowa's children's magazine, she edited an issue on the orphan trains.

In her debut novel for middle-grade readers, Iowa City author Ethel Barker tells an orphan train story from the perspectives of three New York City street children. In July 1880 a "street rat" named Pete befriends two recently orphaned sisters, Iris and Rosie. A mumblety-peg lesson leads to an encounter with police and placement in an orphanage. From there, "the Reverend" invites them to board a train bound for rural Iowa. (Readers familiar with orphan train history will recognize later references to "Reverend Brace" as allusions to Charles Loring Brace, founder of the Children's Aid Society, whose emigration plan for destitute children eventually became known as "the orphan trains.") Barker's characters are placed in separate homes: Pete with a cruel farmer, Iris with an older couple who need a housekeeper, and Rosie with a wealthy—but unhappily married—couple. Chapters are narrated by alternating characters, but their voices are indistinguishable, often sounding more like an adult reminiscing about the distant past. Barker weaves a tale that "is almost too strange to be believed," to borrow a line from one of her characters.

A *Palimpsest* article, "The Orphan Train Comes to Clarion" (Fall 1988), piqued Barker's interest in this topic. From 1854 to 1929, charitable organizations removed poor children from New York City (not all were orphans), transporting an estimated 200,000 to new homes in "western" states. Approximately 8,000–10,000 children landed in Iowa. Young readers interested in learning more should look up *The Goldfinch* magazine's spring 2000 issue devoted to orphan trains in Iowa history.

*Light on the Prairie: Solomon D. Butcher, Photographer of Nebraska's Pioneer Days*, by Nancy Plain. Bison Books. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012. 113 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography. \$16.95 paper.

Reviewer Kate Elliott is assistant professor of art history at Luther College. Her research and writing have focused on Western American art.

As Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie* series enters its eightieth year of publication, it is clear that the story of the American pioneer continues to enthrall young readers. No stranger to the genre of young adult non-fiction herself, Nancy Plain adds to the story of pioneer perseverance with her beautifully illustrated examination of