

Even so, *Kids' Stuff* is a marvelous read. It is a fascinating topic, presented in a readable, enjoyable manner. The author has done an excellent job of researching how all sorts of adults have attempted to mold the wants and desires of American children. The book will find a niche in the classrooms of those teaching the history of the family, popular culture, and even American history surveys that incorporate the history of childhood. Equally, the "average" reader, simply wanting a stimulating book, or a journey back into his or her own childhood, will find *Kids' Stuff* well worth the effort.

*Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life*, by Tom Lewis. New York: Viking Penguin, 1997. xiv, 354 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$27.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY TRACY A. CUNNING, MARION, IOWA

*Divided Highways* is the companion book to a documentary film of the same title, which was produced by the author and Larry Hott of Florentine Films (Ken Burns's outfit) and aired on PBS in October 1997. As a result, *Divided Highways* shares several characteristics with its motion picture sibling. For example, Lewis adopts Ken Burns's typical approach to history. The development of the American interstate highway system and its effects on our culture and landscape are told as a story, through the written equivalent of a series of snapshots and descriptions of the actions of several key characters and a few minor ones. The story unfolds chronologically, but unlike the film, the book's narrative is dense with details gleaned from the huge array of documents, images, and oral interviews assembled by Lewis and his research assistants. Given the book's few endnotes, however, much of this information does not appear to be cited.

*Divided Highways* summarizes the evolution of the interstate highways from the Good Roads Movement, through the creation of the federal highway system in the 1920s and the divided highway prototypes of the New Deal era, to the post-World War II boom that led to the creation of the present interstate system in 1956, and its expansion in the ensuing decades. Throughout the book, Lewis focuses on the critical interaction between public sentiment and legislative and bureaucratic decisions about the highway system. Americans have always loved their cars. Since the 1910s the highway departments have played a perpetual game of catch-up: as they expand and improve the road network, more people buy cars. When construction of the modern freeways began in 1957, many hailed them as solutions to prob-

lems of urban decline, congestion, and deteriorating roads and bridges. But in the early 1960s citizens began to notice some of the negative consequences of freeway construction: urban blight, suburban sprawl, declining rural communities, and environmental degradation. Growing opposition forced the Federal Highway Administration to consider all possible consequences and to mitigate the adverse effects of construction. Since the 1960s, local residents have occasionally halted construction or forced the removal of existing construction, something unthinkable in the 1950s and before.

The interstate highways took far longer to build than anticipated, the original plan having been fulfilled only in the early 1990s. But in a sense, the interstate highway system will never be complete. The interstates and the vehicles they carry allow greater individual mobility than ever, yet congestion and environmental problems persist. The highways are simultaneously perceived as a great engineering achievement and a significant threat to society. The interstates thus illustrate an essential paradox of American culture: we crave mobility, speed, and modernity at the same time that we seek stability and the perpetuation of a familiar landscape (ix-xiv).

*Divided Highways* is relevant to Iowa history in that it describes the forces behind the twin ribbons of pavement across the state. In addition, its first chapter is devoted to one of Iowa's own, Thomas H. MacDonald, who played a critical role in laying the groundwork for the interstate system. From 1919 to 1953, MacDonald, a native of Montezuma, headed the Federal Bureau of Public Roads (BPR), the predecessor of today's Federal Highway Administration. From 1904 to 1919 MacDonald had been the chief engineer of the State Highway Administration, now the Iowa Department of Transportation. He was responsible for the adoption of uniform standards for road and bridge design in Iowa. He also expanded the department's testing of construction materials and methods. In 1919, as a result of his efforts, Iowa was poised to begin a paving program that would erase her reputation as one of the country's worst "mud states."

MacDonald's thirty-four years at the helm of the BPR were eventful. In the 1920s and '30s he directed a massive campaign to pave the nation's primary roads. In 1925 he was largely responsible for establishing a national network of numbered highways, the first "interstate" highway system. And in the late 1930s and early 1940s he influenced federal highway policy in the direction of "freeways" rather than toll roads, a popular alternative at the time. In short, MacDonald's decisions "transformed the American landscape and affected the daily lives and movements of almost every citizen" (5).

*Divided Highways* is about men like MacDonald who conceived or contributed to the conception of modern interstate highways, and the people who opposed and use(d) them. Lewis weaves their stories together, describing, summarizing, and synthesizing, but in the end he advances no new interpretation of the rise of the American car culture or the effects of the highways built to serve it. That is not really his purpose. This book, like the PBS documentary, is designed to edify and entertain an interested, general audience. Packed with information and written in a pleasingly clear style, *Divided Highways* will do just that.

As a reference, the book is less satisfactory. The narrative, while it flows smoothly, is so seamless that it blurs together like a landscape viewed while traveling at interstate highway speeds. *Divided Highways* needs more rest stops. Introductory summaries for each of the book's three parts and concluding summaries at the end of each chapter would help considerably. The bibliography contains several outdated sources and lacks more recent, standard works. Surprising omissions include Chester H. Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile* (1985); James E. Vance, *Capturing the Horizon* (1990); and Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias* (1987).

Other defects in this otherwise prodigious effort are factual. Did the 1956 act specify 12, 13, or 16 years for the completion of the interstates (xi, 121, 122)? Regarding Iowa, Iowans were not especially progressive when it came to road building, as Lewis states (10). Only in the 1920s did Iowans really commit themselves to paying for all-weather roads, and then only with federal aid. Finally, Thomas H. MacDonald's home town was served by the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railroad, not the "Missouri and St. Louis" (6, 22).

*Iowa's Rural War against Crime, 1920-1941*, by Douglas M. Wertsch. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997. xii, 250 pp. Tables, notes, bibliography, index. \$89.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY CLARE V. MCKANNA JR., SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY

In his discussion of rural crime, Douglas M. Wertsch suggests that between 1920 and 1940 "Iowa's rural law enforcement officers shared . . . the belief that they faced the threat of an engulfing 'crime wave'" (ix). But, as Wertsch convincingly argues, the "crime wave" was an illusion. Discovering that most crime studies are urban oriented, the author chose his topic to provide insights about rural crime and to explain factors that make it distinctive.

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