

she had left behind, see the places she described, and hear from others stories like those he had heard from her. To understand his mother and her stories, he had to grasp the local mythologies, master the landscape, and examine Irish culture from critical perspectives. To authenticate or question her stories, he compared them with stories he heard from others and checked them against facts and chronologies discovered in archival records.

Richard White could not do all this without telling stories himself, as he creates both history and memories. These stories, too, are fascinating, although at times they require the reader to swim upstream in a flow of names and relationships that require a familiarity not easily conveyed on a printed page. Every now and then, however, he offers insights that reward readers' efforts. For example, reflecting on stories he has heard, he admits that he had been slow to understand that in memories "the past is a set of ruins, of ghosts on the roads, of paths worn across the field by feet long dead. The exact order of the creation of these things, or even who created them, does not much matter. What matters is how all these remnants relate to one another in the present." Even so, he sides with history, for "history is most interested in what makes no immediate sense because this is what most clearly distinguishes the past from the present" (49).

If the abundance of unfamiliar names and places in the stories of Sara's Irish past is difficult to manage, the Chicago years pose even more difficulties. The author's thesis is well established early in the book, so it may be natural for readers' interest to flag, as mine did, in the latter parts. More detailed genealogical charts and an index would have been helpful. So would editorial trimming of the redundancies that seemed to increase in frequency as the book progressed.

Nonetheless, the lessons White teaches about the distinctions between memory and history are taught well. The integrity of the discipline of history requires that they be learned.

Salt Lantern: Traces of an American Family, by William Towner Morgan. American Land and Life Series. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1997. xx, 173 pp. Illustrations, maps, tables, notes, appendixes, index. \$29.95 cloth, \$15.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY SUZANNE L. BUNKERS, MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY, MANKATO

In his foreword to *Salt Lantern*, Wayne Franklin comments on the importance of attending to one's memories, and he describes William

Towner Morgan's memoir as a work that "shows the past not as a collection of forgotten items stuffed into some box in the universal attic of our lives but rather as a fertile field full of footprints, traces, clues" (x). This image of the fertile field is an apt one with which to begin one's reading of Morgan's thoughtful and perceptive work of memory and imagination.

The central metaphor around which Morgan structures his memoir is an actual artifact and a family heirloom: a globe from a kerosene lamp filled with sea salt and mementos from his great-grandmother's emigration in 1855 from her home in England to her new home in Pipestone, Minnesota. Morgan explains to readers that, on his childhood visits to the home of his aunt and uncle, he would ask his aunt to take the salt lantern out of the china cabinet where it was kept so that he could inspect it. For Morgan, the salt lantern and the mementos it contained came to symbolize "constancy, fidelity, faith, and immortality" (xv), and it provided the impetus for his search into his family's past.

Readers interested in midwestern American history will find this study especially interesting, not only because it invites them along on the author's ancestral journeys to England, Scotland, and Ireland, but also because it beckons them to landscapes closer to home—those of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, and North Dakota, as the author searches for sites related to successive generations of his maternal and paternal families. Numerous artifacts of material culture help readers understand and appreciate the powerful emotional hold that ancestral villages, landscapes, farmhouses, family letters, paintings, and maps have had on Morgan. Most of all, however, it is people (many of whose portraits are featured in a "family album" section at the back of the book) who capture the author's attention as he attempts to reconstruct their lives and imagine the impact that those lives might have had on his own.

At times, Morgan's observations are guarded, tentative, and searching, as when he imagines the early death of his father, Will Morgan, in 1933, three months before his youngest son, William Towner Morgan, was born. The death of her husband, Will, left the author's mother, Mabelle Brown Morgan, widowed with two teenaged children and a baby on the way. Not surprisingly, Morgan observes, his mother was rarely able to speak of her husband: "Her grief was never resolved, perhaps, so closely twined were my birth and his death" (113).

Along the way, as is the case with most good memoirs, the author's literal journey also becomes a metaphorical one—a spiritual quest during which he gradually recognizes the autobiographical im-

pulse at the heart of his work. As William Towner Morgan notes in his conclusion, "I wrote this book not only to understand and appreciate the lives of my ancestors but also to understand myself" (115). Based on the response of this reader, his attempt is a decisive success.

Dear Family: A Family Saga, through Letters, Diaries, and Personal Stories, Including Four Civil War Journals, by Marjorie Heaton Lynn. Mahomet, IL: Mayhaven Publishing, 1998. xi, 480 pp. Illustrations. \$29.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY CHERILYN A. WALLEY, IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

Opening the covers of *Dear Family* is much like opening a box of family papers you have inherited from your great-aunt Mary. The box is sure to contain wonderful information, but you have to patiently sift through and organize it before the best comes to light. Marjorie Heaton Lynn has collected various journals, letters, and reminiscences from the Heaton family archives and published them in book form. Unfortunately, the published collection is scarcely more accessible than that box of family papers.

The general format of the book is chronological. The volume begins with a short history of Lynn's third-great-grandfather John Heaton and his family. Lynn briefly traces the family's activities in England, and then follows their emigration to America in 1839. A short journal written by John Heaton tells of his joining the Methodist church and his subsequent life as a minister. The family finally settled in Glasgow, Iowa, in 1848. The second section contains short journals and collected letters written by Heaton men during the Civil War. The Civil War section is followed by a few short biographical notes written about various ancestors and about Lynn's great-grandfather Edward Bamford Heaton and grandfather Ernest John Heaton.

The last of the six chapters actually takes up 360 of the 480 pages of the book. Lynn's father, Foss Osmond Heaton, grew up on a farm just west of Shannon City, on the border of Union and Ringgold Counties in southwest Iowa. Lynn includes letters home from Foss Heaton's days at the academy in Indianola and at Simpson College, from which he graduated in 1908. In 1909 Foss married Lillie George, whom he had met and courted at Simpson. Lillie grew up in Dexter, Iowa, and in 1902 (at the age of 17) she began to keep a journal. The journals are printed in full and cover Lillie's life from 1902 through 1915. Also included are letters Foss and Lillie wrote during their courtship. Then, nearer the end of the book, author Marjorie Heaton Lynn includes her own journals. She began to keep a journal in 1926 at age

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