

Iowa, Past to Present: The People and the Prairie, by Dorothy Schwieder, Thomas Morain, and Lynn Nielsen. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1989. viii, 306 pp. Illustrations, maps, index. \$24.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY MICHAEL ZAHS, WASHINGTON (IOWA) JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

For years elementary Iowa history textbooks have not really changed, except to add more pictures. The information has been reorganized, but the content has largely remained the same. Most Iowa history textbooks have covered Iowa from the glacial periods to about 1900 or maybe World War I. Many students and some teachers probably have assumed that Iowa history ended about 1900. These same history textbooks also adopted a "hero and heroics" perspective as they recounted disasters, massacres, and conflicts through the eyes of chiefs, governors, and generals.

Due to the specialized and limited market for Iowa history textbooks, new ones are rare. The newest one, *Iowa, Past to Present*, is different from previous Iowa history textbooks. Instead of reading about the supposed heroics of Abigail Gardner and Kate Shelley, students learn about the everyday life of Emily Hawley Gillespie, Minnie London, and Elmer Powers. They are exposed to ordinary people from all periods of Iowa's past. Students may enjoy reading about heroes, but they can identify with ordinary people—those who made Iowa and continue to make up the state. This text's approach to the past enables students to see where they and their families fit into history.

Iowa, Past to Present is a vast improvement over existing Iowa history textbooks in other ways, too. It presents more material with a greater variety of methods than previous texts. Each chapter includes some primary source material such as diary selections, quotations, or correspondence. This material helps emphasize concepts, adds interest, and allows students to feel as if they "discover" information on their own. Including such material in the text should also prompt teachers to use other hands-on primary source material. The absence of lists of suggested activities and questions at the ends of chapters also encourages teachers to engage the material themselves and not simply to rely on the book to interpret itself to students.* Finally, maps, graphs, and charts are well placed

* The publisher has also published a *Teacher's Guide for Iowa, Past to Present: The People and the Prairie*, by Lynn Nielsen and Jeffrey Blaga, in collaboration with Dorothy Schwieder and Thomas Morain. v, 147 pp. \$12.95 paper. For each chapter of the accompanying text, the teacher's guide summarizes content objectives, lists vocabulary and references (both primary and secondary sources), suggests optional individual and class activities, and, for many chapters, includes a full version of primary materials abridged in the text.—Ed.

and used throughout the text. This is very important for developing and reinforcing student skills. One hopes that this text will encourage the teaching of more Iowa history, especially at the upper grade levels.

Although the state requires the teaching of Iowa history in Iowa's public schools, no existing regulations specify when or for how long it must be taught. Traditionally, it has been taught in the fifth or sixth grade. In 1988 a Blue Ribbon Task Force on the Teaching of Iowa History formed by the State Historical Society of Iowa surveyed Iowa schools to determine the condition of Iowa history education in Iowa. The Task Force found that Iowa history courses are being moved up to the seventh or eighth grade in some schools, but most school curricula still place Iowa studies at the fifth-grade level. Teachers who responded to the survey generally expressed a strong desire for high-quality Iowa history materials, including a textbook, even though in many schools Iowa history instruction lasts only a few weeks.

The Task Force's findings suggest some limitations on the usefulness of *Iowa, Past to Present*. The text contains far too much material for most classes to cover in the amount of time most schools allocate for Iowa history. And the cost is high for a book that may be used for only a portion of the school year. Finally, a textbook is effective only if the reading level is compatible with the grade level at which it is used. This text's seventh-grade reading level is too high for effective use at the fifth-grade level, where most Iowa history is still taught. A text with a seventh-grade reading level will be usable in the seventh grade, but better for the eighth grade. Moreover, the distracting choppiness of the text suggests that the material was written, then simplified for classroom use. The combination of these factors may cause many schools to use the book more as a reference than as a student-issue textbook. Yet there is hope that it will find a more appropriate use.

In November 1989 a new national model curriculum for social studies was presented at the National Council for the Social Studies convention in St. Louis. The curriculum was a joint project of the American Historical Association, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, the National Council for Social Studies, and the Organization of American Historians. The suggested curriculum sequence includes a year of state and local history in the seventh grade as the foundation for building the American and world/global studies courses that follow. Because the length and reading level of *Iowa, Past to Present* are well suited for a year-long course in the seventh grade, the book could play an important role in bringing about

positive change in Iowa history education if the newly suggested curriculum is widely implemented in Iowa.

The more students know about Iowa's past, the better they can fit into Iowa's future. Ralph Nader, in a discussion of American education, said the single most important course for today's students is state and local history. He insisted that students need a sense of roots, of belonging somewhere, to be able to build a future. With the aid of a good teacher, *Iowa, Past to Present* can give students that sense of belonging to Iowa and the enthusiasm for Iowa that our young people need. *Iowa, Past to Present* is a big step forward in the revitalization of the teaching of state and local history in Iowa's classrooms. One hopes this text will encourage the production of materials about ordinary Iowans through time for classroom use. But I think I will miss Kate Shelley.

Bourgmont, Explorer of the Missouri, 1698-1725, by Frank Norall. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988. ix, 192 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, appendixes, bibliography, index. \$18.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY ROGER L. NICHOLS, UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

This slender volume traces the career of Etienne de Véniard, sieur de Bourgmont, in North America. The subject was born in a Normandy village in 1679. In 1698 he was convicted of poaching game from the lands of a nearby monastery. Apparently to escape punishment, he fled to New France, where he enlisted in the *Troupes de la Marine*, the French force used to defend the colony. By 1706 he had been promoted to the rank of ensign. Early that same year he went west to assume temporary command of the garrison at Detroit. When he arrived, he learned that most of the soldiers had deserted and that someone had sold or traded nearly all of the gunpowder to the Indians. Working to keep peace among the quarreling Indians with neither adequate manpower nor presents for the village leaders, he was unable to prevent violence. His superiors blamed Bourgmont for the deaths of several Frenchmen during a battle between contending groups of Indians, so he deserted Detroit and lived among the Indians as a trader for some years.

By 1712 he had gone to live among the Missouri tribe, fathering a son while there as well as learning the tribe's language and earning their respect and cooperation. Although still under a cloud because of his conduct at Detroit, Bourgmont traveled to Louisiana to get support for an expedition up the Missouri River. The author suggests that his

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