

and demonstrates how these very falsehoods were the key to Breton's popular success. Hollister Sturges's paper on Breton is, by contrast, a largely uncritical song of praise, while Gabriel Weisberg's is a standard exercise in art-historical source hunting. On the American side, Patricia Hills's survey of American rustic genre painting, focusing on the work of Eastman Johnson and Winslow Homer, pairs naturally with Bezucha's essay in demonstrating how American farm paintings, less documentary than didactic, preached ideals of community along with entrepreneurial values to an urban audience. Susan J. Rosowski examines the impact of Jules Breton and his revered contemporary Jean-François Millet on the midwestern pastoral vision of Willa Cather, and John E. Carter discusses Solomon Butcher's photographs of Nebraska settlement in the period 1870-1910.

These symposium proceedings offer some important suggestions about how we continue to idealize farm life in America, and in so doing, they validate the claim advanced for Breton's universality. With the exception of Bezucha and Hills, the participants, consciously or not, seem to share certain assumptions about rural life, uncritically subscribing to the romantic agrarian values embodied in the work under review. Ultimately, what we learn in reading these papers is that whatever the region — the French countryside or the agricultural Midwest — artistic and literary conventions have imposed on rural life such an immense burden of grandeur and sentiment that it remains virtually impossible to see it plain.

Field Man: The Chronicle of a Bank Farm Manager in the 1940s, by Harold Bennett Clingerman. Foreword by H. Roger Grant. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1989. xii, 183 pp. Reading list. \$19.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY DONIVER A. LUND, GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS COLLEGE

Harold Bennett Clingerman has left an unusual and valuable account of Nebraska farms from 1941 to 1948, when he served as a "field man" for the United States National Bank of Omaha, supervising about 135 farms in central Nebraska. In an earlier and more prosperous era the bank had made conservative loans to owner-operators with good credit ratings based on 50 percent of realistic appraisals. At the time, the bank regarded such mortgages and encumbrances as "the best security in the world for the loans we made" (13). But the drought, the dust bowl, and the depressed prices of the 1930s drastically changed the picture for farmers, banks, insurance companies, and investors.

In spite of all of the difficulties of the 1930s, Nebraska owner-operators staged an impressive comeback. With the end of the drought

and a new war-born prosperity, the author reported selling three farms on his best day. In 1948 the United States National Bank closed its distressed farm real estate section. When Clingerman started his job in April 1941, he made a careful search of the records and calculated that only 10 percent of the farms or ranches in Boone County were in the hands of owner-operators. In 1949 the county treasurer told him, "Today I think you'd be reasonably safe in stating that figure is reversed."

Field Man is rich in detail about farm life, farm mechanization, and wartime shortages and rationing, and the detail is enriched by stories about how these and other aspects of rural life in the 1940s affected individual lives.

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