

landscapes. The elevators featured cover a range of architectural styles (cylindrical/concrete; wooden/metal sheathed), and both terminal and country elevators are illustrated.

As part of the Johns Hopkins series, *Creating the North American Landscape, Measure of Emptiness* offers important insights into the character of ordinary but meaningful landscapes. The book portrays the grain elevator as a symbol of community vitality, economic energy, and individualism. It confirms what many Iowa historians have long deduced—that the distinctive country elevator is vanishing along with railroad branchlines and country depots. Because it provides a visual-geographical approach, this book will help readers see grain elevators as part of a complex evolving system of grain distribution connecting local communities to outside markets. I highly recommend *Measure of Emptiness* to readers interested in agricultural, architectural, and economic history.

Ballad to an Iowa Farmer and Other Reflections, by Clark Mollenhoff. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1991. xxiii, 85 pp. Illustrations. \$17.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY PETER H. JAYNES, KIRKWOOD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Twenty brief poems, "reflections on farm, family and school," and twenty-five "reflections on war" appear, at first glance, as strange material for review in an historical journal. The fact that they were written by the late Clark Mollenhoff, native Iowan, Pulitzer prize-winner, author, and *Des Moines Register* investigative reporter does not explain their selection. The rationale rests in the foreword, which suggests that the poems will "strike a nostalgic chord" in the reader; in the prologue, which quotes William Wordsworth's claim that "poetry is the most philosophic of all writing . . . its object is truth . . . carried alive into the heart by passion"; and in the poems themselves.

Older Iowans will be reminded of a bygone way of life while younger ones may gain new understanding of how life used to be here. Historians, although not obtaining new "facts" or quantifiable data, may benefit by hearing the emotions and understandings of ordinary people facing various crises as well as living the usual events of a past everyday life. That is, historians may gain a more complete picture of what they frequently write about, especially since their discussion is often distanced from the individuals making that history. This slim volume could help them understand interpersonal relations and sources of self-image in a rural commu-

nity ("Ballad to an Iowa Farmer"), rhythms of rural work and rest ("Harvest Time Interlude" or "Summer Storm"), life after a spouse's death ("Old Bill"), childhood ("Going Home"), the pangs of leaving for war ("Parting" and "Clickety Clack"), the death of a friend ("Tommy"), the trials of military training ("Small Boat Drill"), and the impact of letters from home during war ("Sue" and "To My Five-Year-Old"). This book (and others like it) might well bring historians closer to a basic component of the story they write.

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