

who influenced the political discussion. His analysis would have benefited, however, from further explanation of how Taylor's racial ideology developed in Iowa, possibly by more closely examining other local black leaders and the political and cultural environment in Oskaloosa and Ottumwa. Additionally, because the book focuses on eastern and central Iowa, we are left to wonder about possible connections to western black Iowans such as Nodaway Valley farmers or Sioux City laborers. As Mouser himself admits, additional research in the archives of the State Historical Society of Iowa in Des Moines might have proved useful, but so might have a look further west. Finally, further explanation of why most African Americans remained loyal to the Republican Party would better show the obstacles that Taylor faced in his efforts to highlight other options. These issues aside, Mouser has written an excellent biography of a forgotten but important leader.

The Brilliant Bandit of the Wabash: The Life of the Notorious Outlaw Frank Rande, by Mark Dugan, with Anna Vasconcelles. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010. xi, 201 pp. Illustrations, notes index. \$22.95 cloth.

Reviewer John E. Hallwas is Distinguished Professor Emeritus at Western Illinois University. His books include *Dime Novel Desperadoes: The Notorious Maxwell Brothers* (2008) and *The Bootlegger: A Story of Small-Town America* (1998).

This biography of outlaw Frank Rande is a welcome addition to our understanding of nineteenth-century lawbreakers in the Midwest. Even though he was notorious in the 1870s and early 1880s, Rande has received no previous modern attention, other than a three-part newspaper series and a three-part magazine series a half-century ago.

The Brilliant Bandit of the Wabash is well researched, if narrowly focused, and provides long-needed information on Rande's background. Born in 1839 and raised in Pennsylvania, he left home at age 20 but soon rejoined his family, which had emigrated to Fairfield, Iowa, in 1860. The authors chronicle his two marriages, his several years as a trapper in Minnesota, and then his career of burglaries and killings (launched in Iowa but covering several states in the upper Mississippi valley) that stretched from 1871 until his capture late in 1877. Tried in Galesburg, Illinois, in 1878, and convicted of murdering a posse member at Gilson in that county (Knox), he was sentenced to life in prison at Joliet, where he was an unruly inmate. After attacking and almost killing a deputy warden on March 1, 1884, he was found hanged in his solitary confinement cell six days later, an apparent suicide.

The most notable shortcoming of the book is the lack of context. What was small-town Iowa, especially Fairfield, like in the 1860s? The authors do not say — they don't even indicate the town's population. Did Rande leave Iowa for the wilds of Minnesota to avoid service in the Civil War? Rande is a young man in the early 1860s, but the war's outbreak is not mentioned and the authors never consider its potential impact (it spawned an upsurge of outlawry). Likewise, Rande's law-breaking career coincides with one of America's great depressions, which started in 1872, and which greatly increased the amount of burglary by wandering, out-of-work tramps like Rande, but that is also never mentioned.

And Rande's psychological makeup is not well explored. Did the public attitude toward outlaws — who were often admired for their self-assertion and toughness — have any impact on Rande, who so obviously wanted to be celebrated? The authors assert that he was affected by "dime novels" (x), but they fail to explore this matter. Actually, outlaw heroes do not appear in dime novels until 1881 (when Billy the Kid, Jesse James, and the Maxwell brothers all appear for the first time), but that was after Rande was already in prison.

Rande obviously had mental problems, but the authorities never took his condition seriously, as was common during that era. Wouldn't the harsh conditions at Joliet (solitary confinement, the silence rule, eleven-hour workdays six days a week, often abusive guards, and Rande's meager bread and water diet in solitary "till he was so weak that he was no longer able to stand up" [159]) probably have made his mental condition worse? In fact, like the psychologically uninformed officials of that era, the authors simply assert, "It was evident that Rande was feigning insanity" (157). That seems unlikely, considering his mental issues from childhood, his inability to develop any lasting relationships, and the various later accounts of "his foolish talk" that was both "rambling and disconnected" (165).

And what does the contemporaneous commentary on Rande reveal about how public attitudes shaped his career? The authors tend to accept whatever newspapers from that era had to say about Rande without critiquing their often shallow, sensationalized, and sometimes inaccurate writing. Moreover, Rande was the subject of a short book that appeared in the decade after he died, Frank Hitchcock's *A True Account of the Capture of Frank Rande, "The Notorious Outlaw"* (1897), but the authors never discuss the perspectives and shortcomings of that book — or even indicate that it appeared.

In fact, the authors never display any interest in the issues inherent in the story, issues that would provide greater insight into Rande, law

enforcement and penitentiaries during that era, and American culture during the post-Civil War period that spawned many of our country's most noted outlaws. Their bibliography, which lists only four books published in the twentieth century, also reflects their failure to contextualize the life of this long-overlooked midwestern outlaw.

Palaces on the Prairie, by Rod Evans. Fargo: North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, 2009. iii, 241 pp. Illustrations, notes. \$29.95 cloth.

Reviewer Mary Anne Beecher is associate professor of architecture at the University of Manitoba. Her research and writing have focused on vernacular architecture, especially roadside architecture.

Whether considering the popularity of Seattle's 1962 Space Needle or Herzog and de Meuron's more recent Beijing National Stadium known as The Bird's Nest, the public's fascination with architectural spectacles is undeniable. With Rod Evans's recent book on the corn, bluegrass, coal, flax, grain, alfalfa, cotton, and sugar beet "palaces" that sprang up across the Midwest in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, we learn the history of such obscure American structures and the events that coincided with them. The role of such architectural oddities in local boosterism and regional competitiveness (and the occasional cooperation that emerged among communities as well) is articulated in the careful detail with which Evans documents the history of each unique structure.

This book is essentially an encyclopedia of the palaces clad in grain, corn, and various other types of crops produced across the prairie and plains states in the late nineteenth century. Eager to show off their productivity to the world while celebrating their cultural sophistication and the arrival of modern conveniences such as electric street lighting, the townspeople of such places as Sioux City, Iowa; Grand Island, Nebraska; and Waco, Texas, concocted plans and raised funds to build novel exposition structures as a way of gaining regional or national attention. The structures ranged in size from something equivalent to today's double garage to grand edifices that surpassed 40,000 square feet in area at heights of more than 100 feet. Such structures were usually built and rebuilt annually since crops or coal make rather temporary cladding. The only corn-clad exposition building that still survives is in Mitchell, South Dakota, and it remains a well-known local attraction for travelers still willing to take a little detour from Interstate 90. Evans documents at least 23 such "palaces" that were constructed (and reconstructed) in small to medium-sized cities in Iowa, Nebraska, North and South Dakota, Missouri, Texas, Wyoming, and Illinois in the late 1880s