

made in this area with huge cranes that could load or unload particular trailers or containers from rail cars and the development of empty-well flatbed cars that allowed for the double-stacking of containers. Computer technology was valuable as well. Since the railroads could now track the goods they carried, high speed, point-to-point shipping service became possible.

Besides examining the roles of politics, economics, and technology in the railroad industry, Saunders also considers the struggles between management and labor. Those difficulties might best be captured in the battle over continued use of cabooses long after computers and electronic sensors had eliminated their purpose.

In the last half of the book, Saunders surveys the industry by region from the 1980s through the 1990s and discusses the dissolution of the ICC, mergers that resulted in several giant roads—the Burlington Northern Santa Fe, the Union Pacific–Southern Pacific, and the combination of Canadian National with the Illinois Central—and the splitting up of Conrail into CSX and the Norfolk Southern.

Although Saunders's story is one of an industry rising triumphantly from death's door, the railroads still face major problems, chief among them the need for capital to expand capacity, and their future success remains in question.

Readers may be distracted by the author's frequent insertion of his strongly held opinions; and the absence of photographs, particularly of some of the new technologies, is noticeable. Nonetheless, for its breadth and its descriptions of specific roads, *Main Lines* is an important book. It should be read by those interested in railroads or transportation history.

Sioux City History, 1980–2002, by Marcia Poole. Virginia Beach, VA: Donning Co., 2003. 304 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index.

Reviewer Dennis N. Mihelich is historian and associate archivist at Creighton University. His primary areas of research and publication are African American and urban history, especially the history of Omaha.

Befitting her journalistic background, Marcia Poole has written a readable, episodic, descriptive narrative of recent Sioux City history. The work employs an abundance of photographs to help readers visualize the story and a wealth of sidebars to report on interesting events not necessarily related to her general thesis. All but 11 of her 118 citations come from the archives of her former employer, the *Sioux City Journal*.

Each of her four chapters consists of a series of unfolding news stories, which support her thesis that the era witnessed a major trans-

formation: Sioux City went from "Sewer City," a deteriorating "cow town" losing jobs and population, to a growing, economically vibrant city that served as the heart of "Siouxland." The episodes illustrate urban renewal, highlighting a battle between politicians and developers over suburban expansion versus downtown and riverfront regeneration; the happy result was that the city got both.

Moreover, an unfortunate calamity, the crash of United Flight 232 on July 19, 1989, galvanized the community and served as the defining moment in an equally important attitudinal transformation. "The harrowing tragedy and its extraordinary aftermath not only changed the way the nation thought of Sioux City, it changed the way Sioux City thought of itself" (17). Thus, while the shifting economy (from stockyards and big meatpackers to gambling, computers, and boxed beef) and the changing population (a large influx of Southeast Asians and "Latinos") continue to alter the area, the recent story of Sioux City was one of "Two Decades of Renewal." (291).

Harker's Barns: Visions of an American Icon, photographs by Michael P. Harker, text by Jim Heynen. A Bur Oak Book. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2003. xiv, 89 pp. Photographs, technical notes. \$24.95 paper.

The American Barn, by David Plowden. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2003. 160 pp. Photographs, technical notes. \$50.00 cloth.

Reviewer James R. Shortridge is professor of geography at the University of Kansas. In addition to writing an article about Kansas barns, he has authored four books about the Middle West, including *Our Town on the Plains: J. J. Pennell's Photographs of Junction City, Kansas, 1893-1922* (2000).

Agrarian life, the touchstone for Iowa and midwestern culture, has been in rapid decline since the 1940s. We all know this. But as long as the familiar rural landscape of barn, silo, and house remained intact, urban citizens were able to draw from it a continuing symbolic attachment to the land. This tenuous anchor itself is now about to disappear, with Iowa alone losing a thousand big barns every year (Harker, xi). The two books under review here are photographic tributes to these vanishing structures.

Michael Harker's and David Plowden's projects are similar in many ways. Both men employ black-and-white formats as the best way to capture the quality of light on old wood; both minimize their texts in order to maximize illustration; and, curiously, both exclude human actors from their exposures. Both also have found publishers willing to provide the quality of paper and printing needed for fine reproduction.

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