

Book Review

Cyrus Clay Carpenter and Iowa Politics, 1854-1898, by Mildred Throne. Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa. 1974. 302 pp. \$8.00.

For twelve years Mildred Throne was the widely respected associate editor of the *Iowa Journal of History*. At her untimely death in 1960, she left a nearly completed manuscript on Cyrus Clay Carpenter—the eighth governor of Iowa. With publication of Throne's study of Carpenter the State Historical Society has resumed its tradition of publishing books dealing with Iowa's past.

Throne has written a brilliant biography of Cyrus Carpenter. Yet she has done considerably more than that: she has also written a fine political history of the state, circa 1854-1898, skillfully mirroring the political record of Iowa in those years against the national experience of the same era. The book is divided into 16 chapters; the author has employed the usual chronological format.

Throne's treatment of Carpenter is as evenhanded as her research is thorough. She portrays him not as a great man who changed the course of history. Rather, she shows him as "a politician, a loyal party member, who worked for his party and his community in the light of his beliefs, which were typical of his time (p. 253)." On the other hand, Carpenter was not merely a pawn of the Gilded Age. He was, as Throne demonstrates, a man of character and high standards. He was not ruthless; in fact, he lacked drive. As a result, Throne properly judges him as one of "many minor public officials who made no outstanding mark on their time but are the warp and woof of the political fabric (p. 253)." Yet in our time—with the shadow of Watergate forever over our shoulders—Carpenter's basic honesty has great appeal.

The author's style is pleasant; the book reads easily. The chapters are generally of uniform literary and historical merit, although there are a few problems with paragraph organization in chapters 13 and 14. The work is remarkably error free. A minor mistake appears, however, on page 40: there the Iowa Central Air Line Rail Road—rather than the Chicago, Iowa and Nebraska—is erroneously credited as "pushing toward Clarence" from Clinton.

In sum, this book—the latest addition to the Iowa Biography Series—is a distinct credit to its author and to the State Historical Society of Iowa as well.

—Donovan L. Hofsommer, Wayland College

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