

and western Texas, New Mexico, the border area along the lower Missouri River, and the central plains.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, federal authorities had reached several general conclusions based on experiences of the past half dozen years. They believed tribes had to be gathered together in areas away from the routes of United States' expansion. Here they could be prevented from attacking whites or harming each other. Most officials had concluded that the end results of such a policy was clear, either extermination or civilization. All seemed pleased with the restricted atmosphere except the Indians, and they are were not asked.

Trennert has looked at a period of Indian-white relations usually ignored or passed over lightly by most authors. He has asked some significant questions, probed a wide variety of primary and secondary sources to offer some answers, and hopefully stimulated additional work in this period of concentrated American expansion.

—David A. Walker  
University of Northern Iowa

# #

*Years of Struggle: The Farm Diary of Elmer G. Powers, 1931-1936*, co-edited by H. Roger Grant and L. Edward Purcell. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1976. pp. 158, \$6.95.

The social historian in recent years has utilized quantitative methods to analyze behavior patterns and arrive at an understanding of the past. But for all the raw data obtained from tax assessors' lists, census manuscripts, and plat maps, there is nothing quite like a "personal document" to add some life and fire to the rows of numbers. Thus it is especially fortunate for Iowa historians that a state so well endowed with quantifiable materials should now have as rare a document as a twentieth century farm diary to use as a benchmark for research into rural life.

Although the editors claim that Elmer Powers "was almost a stereotype of the midwestern farmer," in fact his background, and particularly his membership in the Church of the Brethren, made him and his family hardly typical of the run-of-the-mill Iowa farm operators. A Brethren community, for example, was singled out in the early 1920s by both the United States Office of Education, and the rural sociologists at Ames, as a model farm neighborhood—indeed, one from which all Iowa farm folk could learn. In many ways the members of the Brethren community were atypical of the Iowa rural population: they had social consciences, they were interested in educational achievement for their children, they were community orientated, their farming was of a high standard, and unlike many of their Yankee peers, they tended to stay on the farm to concentrate on the accumulation of property.

Many of these characteristics are apparent in the Powers diary, which, like a number of "country diaries" before and since, was meant for public consumption. The diary was originally solicited by an editor at *Wallace's Farmer* for occasional publication in that journal in the early thirties. Though the pieces appeared infrequently, Powers continued to write until his death in 1942.

The fact that the diary was written for public consumption becomes something of an advantage and a disadvantage for the historian trying to make maximum use of a unique document. The advantages are fairly obvious. As a medium of opinion it is an excellent source of information on farm conditions in the worst years of the Depression. In addition, it gives insight into the reception of government farm programs, and why farmers often found them wanting; on the souring relationship between city and country; and on the world view of a right-of-center farm operator in this period. The diary is also very strong on the nitty gritty of farm life. Powers' descriptions of how he spent his time are exceedingly revealing.

The diary conveys an intimate sense of community among open country people. In spite of the fact that farmers lived isolated from one another, they took every chance they could to make contact with their neighbors. Powers left his farm for extended periods each day to attend sales, farmers meetings, and visit the local elevator, and bank. He was also active in many neighborhood institutions such as the school board, and he participated in the farm program generated by the federal government. Nowhere was this "community mindedness" shown better than in the powerful descriptions of the harsh winter of 1936 when for weeks the thermometer stood below zero, and the men of the neighborhood manned snowplows, fighting to keep their roads open.

The diary unfortunately is less satisfactory as a document for family history. To be sure, as a farm diary we can only expect emphasis on practical farming matters, but as much of this information is so revealing it is a pity that even tangentially the Powers family affairs did not receive more attention so that we might tap the psychological aspects of family relationships. There are certainly interesting snippets of information about rural family life. The kinship networks, visiting practices, and most importantly, the patriarchal relationship the elder Powers had with his sons, are just the top of the iceberg—if only we had more of this kind of material!

In sum, this handsome book with its photographs and excellent introduction is a distinct asset to rural literature, and to Iowa's past as well. We can only hope that the Iowa State University Press will continue to sponsor similar ventures in the future.

—Mark Friedberger  
The Newberry Library, Chicago

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.