

Harker's One-Room Schoolhouses: Visions of an Iowa Icon, by Michael P. Harker, with essay by Paul Theobald. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2008. 85 pp. Photographs. \$24.95 paper.

Reviewer Kathy Penningroth is co-principal of A&P Historical Resources. She has conducted extensive research on the early twentieth-century Iowa State Superintendent of Public Instruction Agnes Samuelson and is the author of her entry in *The Biographical Dictionary of Iowa*.

Michael Harker's skillfully rendered black-and-white photographs capture the simple dignity of 66 nineteenth-century one-room and small schoolhouses — some restored, some deteriorated — that survive on the early twenty-first-century Iowa landscape. Education historian Paul Theobald describes the evolution of one-room schoolhouses, using the 1869–70 diary of the son of a Linn County farmer and school board director to illustrate the interaction between the farm economy and the educational process. Both Harker and Theobald emphasize the importance of the one-room school as a symbol of the value Iowa settlers placed on education, and, in turn, as a physical structure central to their community gatherings. A Bur Oak Book, *Harker's One-Room Schoolhouses* is a beautiful representation of mid-western culture.

Following the theme of his *Harker's Barns: Visions of an American Icon* (2003), Harker set out to photograph the historic architecture of education built during the vibrant period of Iowa's settlement and growth. From the historian's perspective, however, the date of construction of each schoolhouse would have been a welcome addition to the note of its location, providing the opportunity to trace the advance of settlement from east to west and to assess the success of Iowa's developing agricultural economy. As the American populace pressed further westward, it maintained its dedication to education, constructing one-room schoolhouses on the Great Plains well into the twentieth century, joining Harker's striking photographs to a broader historiography. John Martin Campbell's *The Prairie Schoolhouse* (1996) documents the scattered remnants of these efforts in stark black-and-white photographs. With a detailed narrative accompanied by abundant photographs, Wayne Fuller describes the history of one-room schoolhouse education, including architecture, financing, curricula, and teaching, in *One-Room Schools of the Middle West* (1994). *Schoolwomen of the Prairies and Plains* by Mary Hurlbut Cordier (1992) provides accounts of life in nineteenth- and twentieth-century schoolhouses through the diaries, letters, and journals of five teachers, among them Sarah Gillespie Huftalen, a native Iowan who began her long career in education in a one-room school in northeastern Iowa in 1885.