

Here You Have My Story: Eyewitness Accounts of the Nineteenth-Century Central Plains, edited by Richard E. Jensen. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009. xi, 387 pp. Tables, notes, bibliography, index. \$30.00 paper.

Reviewer Michael L. Tate is professor of history at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. He is the author of *Indians and Emigrants: Encounters on the Overland Trails* (2006).

Richard Jensen has assembled 23 reminiscences by as many authors to recreate a sense of what life was like in Nebraska and surrounding states during the nineteenth century. These were selected from a larger slate of articles that originally appeared in the Nebraska State Historical Society's *Proceedings and Transactions and Reports* between 1885 and 1919. The selections are organized in four topical categories — Indian Country, Military Campaigns and Army Life, Overland Freighting, and White Settlement — and are reprinted in their entirety.

The editor has chosen wisely from the larger selection of articles that were available to him, but he cautions the reader to consider two matters before taking the recollections at face value. First, they were written exclusively by white men and women. These members of the pioneer generation conveyed the standard prejudices of the day, especially in relating their ethnocentric feelings about American Indians and other racial minorities. Second, the 23 authors were often living decades beyond the events they described. Thus memory lapses and subjective vantage points sometimes led to inaccuracies and biased information in the recollections. Like all historical records, they must be evaluated against corroborating and contradictory evidence found in other sources. To correct some of these inaccuracies and to refer readers to other valuable materials for comparison, Jensen has assembled 30 pages of valuable explanatory endnotes.

Persons interested in Iowa history, as well as in the pioneer period on the Great Plains, will benefit from reading these reminiscences. More extensive introductions to each of the selections and a range of relevant maps would have enhanced the otherwise worthy package.

Barbed Wire: The Fence that Changed the West, by Joanne S. Liu. Missoula, MT: Mountain Press Publishing, 2009. viii, 141 pp. Illustrations, maps, appendixes, chronology, glossary, bibliography, index. \$14.00 paper.

Reviewer Ginette Aley is the Carey Fellow in the History Department at Kansas State University. Her research and writing have focused on nineteenth-century rural and agricultural history, particularly of the American Midwest.

Joanne Liu's *Barbed Wire* tells a simple story about how a mere twist of wire ultimately reorganized the landscape and people of the American West. The major tension is between cattlemen and newcomers, the settler-farmers, along with corresponding and sometimes heated conflicting viewpoints such as beliefs in the law of the open range versus herd laws. Each represented a way of life and livelihood that was threatened by the other, to say little of the combined influence on Plains Indians. Events and innovations, however, would come to favor one side over the other and impose a permanent and far-reaching change that affected not only the West but the Midwest as well.

Focusing on Texas, Liu opens with a look at the rise of the American cattle industry and notes that the end of the Civil War was a catalyst for change. The war had proven that there was money to be made from western beef. But with the attendant need for access to the open range for grazing and the huge cattle drives to markets, cattlemen began having problems with the rising numbers of settler-farmers. Buoyed by the passage of the Homestead Act in 1862 and the market interest in grain production, farmers also shared an interest in moving west.

Perhaps no other American dilemma proves the old adage — necessity is the motherhood of invention — more than the problem of farmers and fencing. The lack of timber the farther west one went, for example, hampered the development of farms, including in Iowa. The Iowa State Agricultural Society's 1860 annual report implored, "What Shall We Do for Fences?" Among those offering solutions was a 60-year-old midwestern farmer, Joseph Glidden from DeKalb, Illinois, whose 1873 patent for wire with attached twisted barbs quickly revolutionized fencing. Four years later the total production of barbed wire in the United States was nearly 13 million pounds. But with it came a range of consequences and opposition such as anti-barbed wire groups, fence-cutting wars, patent violators, supporters of "free wire," illegal fencing (or land-grabbing), particularly of public lands, and, in effect, the end of the open range cattle era. By the 1880s and 1890s, the railroad companies would become one of the largest consumers of barbed wire, as they fenced the lines' rights-of-way. All of this worked to transform the West (and Midwest) in a remarkably short period of time.

Liu's *Barbed Wire* is difficult to review as an academic work. While it incorporates a useful array of images and presents an interesting overview, it does not contain a scholarly apparatus beyond the briefest of bibliographies. It is almost too simplistic to use in a college classroom; on the other hand, one can imagine its use as a handbook, perhaps at a relevant historic site or museum.