

The past thirty years alone have witnessed important and impactful improvements. Statewide standards, improved access to Iowa history resources and professional development, as well as new teaching strategies are important steps forward. Ultimately, local historical societies, cultural organizations, school districts and history professionals around the state want the same thing—for Iowa students to learn more about their local history, to understand and assess its complexities and to feel ownership and investment in their community. This effort to promote Iowa history education is not new. It reflects over a century of work here in the state and that work continues.

Iowa's Political Heritage: A Quarter Century of Historical Publications and Research Possibilities

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TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, Iowa celebrated the 150th anniversary of its entry into the Union, and, not surprisingly, authors and publishers took note of the anniversary. Among the titles released that year was a highly anticipated volume by Dorothy Schwieder, a professor at Iowa State University and doyen of Iowa history. That book, *Iowa: The Middle Land*, was published to great acclaim. In fact, as Marvin Bergman noted in this journal, reviewers hailed it as “a landmark event for Iowa history.”

It was also true that the book was not definitive. As Schwieder herself noted, the book generally ignored politics and government. Those topics, she noted, had been “amply covered” in previous histories. That is not to say that political and governmental issues have been ignored over the past quarter century.

Any review of recent scholarship on Iowa's political history should begin with *The Biographical Dictionary of Iowa*, edited by David Hudson, Marvin Bergman, and Loren Hutton (Iowa City, IA, 2008). This substantive volume includes over four hundred entries for Iowans who contributed to Iowa's life and culture and nearly a quarter of these entries are on politicians or government officials.

There are also publications that expand our understanding of Iowa's political leadership. On presidential politics, see Robert Mitchell's *Skirmisher: The Life, Times, and Political Career of James B. Weaver*

(Roseville, MN, 2008). Weaver was the first Iowan to be the nominee for president on a national political party—The Greenback Party—in 1892.

Anyone interested in how Iowa presents itself to the nation should read “The Power of Prickliness: Iowa’s H.R. Gross in the US House of Representatives,” by David W. Schwieder and Dorothy Schwieder in *The Annals of Iowa* 65 (2006), 329–68. Gross was a conservative who foreshadowed the current acrimony in Congress.

A completely different experience in Congress is found in *Mr. Smith Went to Washington: From Eisenhower to Clinton* (Ames, 1996) by Neal Smith who represented Iowa in Congress from 1959 to 1995. Unlike Gross, Smith utilized his time in Washington to make substantive legislative change.

The two icons of Iowa political history—Henry A. Wallace and Herbert Hoover—were the focus of biographers over the past twenty-five years. John C. Culver and John Hyde published the well-regarded *American Dreamer: The Life and Times of Henry Wallace* (New York, 2000). Also of note is Thomas W. Devine’s *Henry Wallace’s Campaign and the Future of Postwar Liberalism* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2013). For Hoover, it is best to start with “Herbert Hoover and the Historians—Recent Developments: A Review Essay,” by Ellis W. Hawley that appeared in *The Annals of Iowa* 78 (2019), 75–86.

The conservative shift in Republican party politics has come in for attention in the last two years. Jon K. Lauck and Catherine McNichol Stock are the editors of an interesting volume of essays titled *The Conservative Heartland: A Political History of the Postwar American Midwest* (Lawrence, KS, 2020). Iowa is one of the nine states in the study. Marc Johnson published *Tuesday Night Massacre: Four Senate Elections and the Radicalization of the Republican Party* (Norman, OK, 2021), which focuses on three midwestern elections (and one in Idaho) in 1980 including the first senatorial victory for Charles Grassley. Together these books mark out a new line of inquiry for political historians.

At the state level, there has been notice given to the steady transition of power from one governor to another. A thoughtful study is Christopher W. Larimer’s *Gubernatorial Stability in Iowa: A Stranglehold on Power* (New York, 2015). Also see the extensive review of the book in “Explaining Gubernatorial Stability in Iowa: A Review Essay and Author’s Response” by James C. Larew and Christopher W. Larimer published in *The Annals of Iowa* 76 (2017), 316–34.

Two Republican governors also merited attention. Matthew R. Walsh published *The Good Governor: Robert Ray and the Indochinese Refugees of Iowa* (Jefferson, NC, 2017), which focuses on Ray’s exceptional humanitarian work. Also of note is Mike Chapman’s biography, *Iowa’s*

Record Setting Governor: The Terry Branstad Story (Des Moines, 2015), a brief overview of Branstad's accomplishments over twenty years of service as governor.

Local politics was the subject of three articles in *The Annals of Iowa*. See William M. Ferraro, "Representing a Layered Community: James, Lampson P., and Hoyt Sherman and the Development of Des Moines, 1850–1900," *Annals of Iowa* 57 (1998), 240–273; Silvana R. Siddali, "'Principle, Interest and Patriotism All Combine': The Fight Over Iowa's Capital City," *Annals of Iowa* 64 (2005), 111–38; and Andrew Klumpp, "Colony before Party: The Ethnic Origins of Sioux County's Political Tradition," *Annals of Iowa* 79 (2020), 1–34.

In addition to political leadership, scholars have focused on controversial social issues. On tobacco, see the review of a report by Marc Linder, [*Inherently Bad and Bad Only: A History of State Level Regulation of Cigarettes and Smoking in the United States since the 1880s, Volume I, An In-depth National Study Embedding Ultra-Thick Description of a Representative State (Iowa)*] published in *The Annals of Iowa* 73 (2014), 180–82. On alcohol, see Jerry Harrington, "Iowa's Last Liquor Battle: Governor Harold E. Hughes and the Liquor-by-the-Drink Conflict," *Annals of Iowa* 75 (2017), 1–46, and Glen Ehrstine and Lucas Gibbs, "Iowa's Prohibition Plague: Joseph Eiboeck's Account of the Battle over Prohibition, 1846–1900," *Annals of Iowa* 78 (2019), 1–74. On the death penalty, see Dick Haws, *Iowa and the Death Penalty: A Troubled Relationship, 1834–1965* (Ames, 2010).

Two studies on marriage equity and equality appeared in the past few years. See Kate Hoey and Joy Smith's "Marriage and Dependence in Iowa and U.S. Law: *Acuff v. Schmit*, 1956," *Annals of Iowa* 72 (2013), 201–37. Two journalists, Tom Witosky and Marc Hansen, published a particularly useful study of marriage equality in Iowa. See their book *Equal Before the Law: How Iowa Led Americans to Marriage Equality* (Iowa City, 2015).

The regulation and use of energy were also controversial and received scholarly attention in *The Annals of Iowa* in 2018. See Jeffrey T. Manuel, "Iowa's Original Ethanol Debate: The Power Alcohol Movement of 1934," *Annals of Iowa* 77 (2018), 41–78 and Sharon M. Lake, "Nuclear Power on Trial: The Acquittal of the Palo 13," *Annals of Iowa* 77 (2018), 341–83.

Iowa's political establishment benefited from federal assistance during times of crisis. Herbert Hoover's troubled relationship with his native state can be found in Calvin W. Coquillet, "A Failure Or 'A Very Great Public Service?': Herbert Hoover, Iowa Banks, and the National Credit Corporation," *Annals of Iowa* 58 (1999), 388–412.

Iowa benefited significantly from federal programs beginning in the 1930s. The impact of the New Deal on Iowa can be found in Kenneth

Finegold and Theda Skocpol, *State and Party in America's New Deal* (Madison, WI, 1995) and Gregg R. Narber, *The Impact of the New Deal on Iowa: Changing the Culture of a Rural State* (Lewiston, NY, 2008). On a Republican program that aided Iowa, see Tom Lewis, *Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life* (New York, 1997).

Opposition to the Vietnam War had a significant impact on Iowa's political landscape. On the relationship between political conservatism and anti-war protest, see Bill Kauffman, *Ain't My America: The Long, Noble History of Anti-War Conservatism and Middle-American Anti-Imperialism* (New York, 2008). Also of interest is Clyde Brown and Gayle K. Pluta Brown, "Iowa University Towns and the Twenty-sixth Amendment: The First Test of the Newly Established Student Vote in 1971," *Annals of Iowa* 68 (2009), 395–442.

Another social change of interest to historians has been gender politics. Worthy of special attention is Sara Egge, *Woman Suffrage and Citizenship in the Midwest, 1870–1920* (Iowa City, 2018); Catherine E. Rymph, *Feminism and Conservatism from Suffrage through the Rise of the New Right* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2006); and Suzanne O'Dea, *Madam Chairman: Mary Louise Smith and the Republican Revival after Watergate* (Columbia, MO, 2012). William B. Friedrichs offers an interesting and sympathetic biography of activist Roxanne Conlin in *Unstoppable: The Nine Lives of Roxanne Barton Conlin* (Des Moines, 2020). Also of value is Anna L. Bostwick Flaming, "Opening Doors for Iowa Women: Gender, Politics, and the Displaced Homemaker, 1977–1983," *Annals of Iowa* 72 (2013), 238–73.

The role of people of color in state and local politics is a largely neglected topic. To be sure, the work of many scholars in *Outside In: African-American History in Iowa, 1838–2000* (Des Moines, 2001) does touch on political issues. But all would agree that we need to know more about the representation and role of Black, Hispanic, and Asian voters in our state.

Perhaps the most significant topic in Iowa's political history are the caucuses. A readable, popular history is John C. Skipper's *The Iowa Caucuses: First Tests of Presidential Aspiration, 1972–2008* (Jefferson, NC, 2010). A more substantive, scholarly work is *Why Iowa? How Caucuses and Sequential Elections Improve the Presidential Nominating Process*, by David P. Redlawsk, Caroline J. Tolbert and Todd Donovan (Chicago, 2011).

Much has been accomplished in the past twenty-five years but much more remains to be done. Certainly, governors such as Robert Ray and Terry Branstad and senators such as Chuck Grassley and Tom Harkin deserve full biographies. Fortunately, papers and records for Ray and Harkin are now available at Drake University.

Another research item is the growing clashes over abortion, school choice, voting restrictions, freedom of speech, and immigration among other issues. The election of more women and more social conservatives to the state legislature has changed the political debate in the state.

Finally, much more work should be done on the history of the Iowa caucuses. Once every four years, Iowa is the subject of intense national attention. Iowans have had a unique role in presidential politics and historians should devote serious attention to this phenomenon.

That politics is central to how Iowa has defined itself is without question. Interested scholars have plenty of work to do as we look forward to the bicentennial of the Hawkeye State in 2046. It's time to acknowledge the continuing value of the general histories of Joseph Wall, Leland Sage and Dorothy Schwieder and set their work aside and push for a new, revised history of Iowa. It's time to fight, fight, fight . . . for Iowa history!