

Lacombe makes several key contributions to gun studies conversations. First, he corrects the widespread perception that the NRA supported gun control early in its history. Drawing on editorials and letters written to congresspeople, Lacombe demonstrates that NRA support for the 1938 Federal Firearms Act was a strategic move to avoid harsher proposed legislation. Secondly, he contributes impressive statistical evidence to the growing scholarly attention on the rise of Second Amendment rhetoric beginning in the 1960s. Finally, Lacombe's bifurcation of the NRA's history into "quasi-governmental" and "partisan" phases provides a helpful framework in which the 1977 Cincinnati Revolt marks the NRA's transition not *into* politics but from *non-partisan* to *partisan* politics.

Readers interested in the NRA as a social or cultural force may be disappointed in *Firepower's* lack of attention to what the political salience of guns says about American culture more broadly. While Lacombe conclusively demonstrates *that* the NRA and right-wing conservatism share an overlapping ideology and rhetoric, he leaves it to other scholars to examine how, historically, the NRA and other right-wing groups influenced each other. Ultimately, Lacombe's work succeeds at documenting the NRA's influence on its members, lawmakers, and the general public throughout the twentieth century. In doing so, Lacombe has provided gun studies scholars a brilliant foundation for further scholarship about the NRA.

Rural Rebellion: How Nebraska Became a Republican Stronghold, by Ross Benes. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2021. Notes. 256 pp. \$29.95, hardcover.

Reviewer Peter Longo is Professor of Political Science at the University of Nebraska, Kearney. He is the editor of *Great Plains Research* and most recently the author of *Great Plains Politics* (2018).

Rural Rebellion: How Nebraska Became a Republican Stronghold, by Ross Benes certainly has a catchy title for a Nebraska audience. But the fine book ought to hold interest to readers in Iowa and beyond as so-called pundits and the general citizenry search for meaning in the highly charged partisan milieu. Iowa like Nebraska is seemingly a Republican stronghold. Recently, the Republican governors of the respective states have only fortified these strongholds; there have been some slips, however—Iowa voted for Barack Obama and Nebraska's 2nd Congressional District voted for President Biden (Nebraska has a system of split electoral votes). That aside, Benes's book provides insights into why Nebraska is so red, even with an occasional blue dot.

Benes lays out a conversational story of his journey through Nebraska's various political variables. The starting point for Benes was his association with the Catholic Church. As he observes: "Vocal Democrats are more apt to see religion as a punching bag whereas Republicans wield it as a cudgel" (19). As the author lays out, Trump switched from pro-choice to pro-life, which allowed him to fortify the Republican base nationally and in Nebraska. Republicans and the pro-life core, he argues, fortified the Nebraska stronghold. No doubt such analysis applies to Iowa as well. The abortion narrative seems partly to explain the migration of pro-life Democrats, especially pro-life Catholics, to the Republican Party. "In Brainard's Catholic church, I didn't hear many sermons about seeking justice for the poor, sick, and incarcerated. I mostly heard about protecting the unborn, and later, about the evils of same-sex marriage" (23). This disdain carried over to many substantive issues associated with Democrats, which allowed Republicans to become even further entrenched in Nebraska. The anecdotal evidence by Benes could serve as background for additional empirical study as well a comparative study with other states.

The abortion issue is joined by a variety of other sub-native issues and the author's stories meander through a variety of highly important topics that would help explain the Republican stronghold in Nebraska. Interesting and vivid narratives on immigration, the Affordable Care Act, the Nebraska Unicameral, university political happenings, and Nebraska Democrats are cleverly discussed in a way that produces an enjoyable and yet concerning read. A concerning aspect is the overplay of winners and losers in Nebraska politics. It surprises no one that Nebraska is a red state. Indeed, you might substitute Nebraska for Iowa or North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas, Oklahoma and so on to underscore the "rural rebellion." The important issue is whether or not politics can lead us to a good life. Benes offers a ray of hope that good policies can emerge: "The environmentalists fighting Canadian energy companies, humanitarians welcoming refugees, nonpartisan state lawmakers putting principle over partisanship, apolitical mayors protecting the most vulnerable constituents, and activists pushing ballot measures that increase health-care access and wages for people on the margins all have something in common, and lay out a pathway for achieving change" (190) in Republican-dominated Nebraska.

It is good for the reader that the author moves beyond his earlier college years' view of studying local politics, as he professes: "Had you told me back then that'd I'd one day write a book about state politics, I would have called it BS and then questioned why I'd waste my time on such a stupid topic" (127). The issues raised throughout the book are far

from stupid. State and local politics are worthy of meaningful and rigorous exploration, whether it be in relation to Nebraska, Iowa, or other midwestern states. Benes does his best to bring to life a political narrative that ought to encourage the reader to scrutinize Nebraska and consider local jurisdictions beyond Nebraska. Can the public good be achieved in a highly partisan milieu? Can good communities be achieved through politics? After all, Aristotle claimed that good politics can lead us to a good life. If Benes is correct, the good life through engaged politics is possible. Still, Benes's observations suggest that many challenges await in Nebraska. The book has considerable merit as a catalyst for additional consideration. In the meantime, readers ought to enjoy *Rural Rebellion: How Nebraska Became a Republican Stronghold*, by Ross Benes.

Backstories: The Kitchen Table Talk Cookbook, edited by Cynthia C. Prescott and Maureen S. Thompson. Grand Forks: University of North Dakota Press, The Digital Press, 2021. 403 pp. \$20 paperback. Free ebook.

Reviewer Jill Nussel, Ph.D., uses cookbooks and food history to examine immigrant lifeways and community development in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

My mother-in-law was a homemaker for over sixty-eight years. She was a family legend in the kitchen and I could always count on her for a recipe for any occasion. After her death this past March, we sorted through bags of recipes, some cut from magazines, others carefully copied, and some just scribbled on the backs of envelopes. This was a daunting task until I took a break to read *Backstories: The Kitchen Table Talk Cookbook*, edited by Cynthia C. Prescott and Maureen S. Thompson.

Examining rural women's history began with women's studies in the 1970s, but was mostly relegated to anecdotal discussions. However, in more recent scholarship, rural women have taken a more prominent place and *Backstories* builds on that legacy. Drawing on a long tradition of women's organizations compiling fundraising cookbooks, *Backstories* combines elements of history, memory and folklore, rural studies, and women's studies. Part cookbook, part memoir, part scholarly commentary, this compilation offers a unique perspective on foodways and social dynamics. Prescott and Thompson assembled forty-three contributors from diverse backgrounds, including scholars from many fields, home economists, community activists, farmers, and homemakers. This wide range of contributors from the United States and Canada produced a volume that elevates cookbooks to a scholarly level while remaining an intimate conversation—exactly what the editors intended.