

## Book Reviews and Notices

*Destination Heartland: A Guide to Discovering the Midwest's Remarkable Past*, by Cynthia Clampitt. Urbana, IL: 3 Fields Books, an imprint of the University of Illinois Press, 2022. ix, 256 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$19.95 paperback.

Reviewer Tova Brandt is Executive Director at the Museum of Danish America in Elk Horn, Iowa. A graduate of Bryn Mawr College and the University of Delaware, she has been working in public history in Iowa for over twenty years.

In *Destination Heartland*, Cynthia Clampitt takes us along on a journey of exploration through the American Midwest and its rich history. The book encourages curiosity and an openness to experiencing history in both expected and unexpected places. The author describes her work of compiling as, “my love letter to the Midwest and its history” (5).

As a travel guide, the volume introduces an array of historic sites and historic experiences. Indeed, the nature of the visitor experience provides the chapter structure for the book: living history sites; historical sites and museums; historic towns and districts; reenactments; and historic restaurants and hotels. Some sites do not fall neatly into the chapter categories, which is why the author included an appendix that lists sites by state. Iowa is represented by one living history site (Living History Farms), one historic district (Amana Colonies), five museums and three historic restaurants.

This book seems to be designed both for residents of the Midwest as well as for visitors who might be persuaded to make the heartland a destination. Residents of the Midwest are often self-deprecating about or unaware of the history in their own backyards; this volume makes a compelling case for day trips or regional travels to better appreciate the cultural and historical richness of the area. For potential visitors from other parts of the country, *Destination Heartland* presents a solid introduction to the region itself and to the evolving definition of “the Heartland.”

For travelers, wherever their starting point, this book highlights many locations that offer excellent insights into the history and culture of the region. The author is upfront that this is not intended to be a comprehensive survey, but rather a description of her own experiences in both familiar and unfamiliar tourist destinations. To make this volume even more handy for planning travel logistics, maps would have been

a welcome addition. For example, unless a reader knows where in a state a town is located, they may not know that Old World Wisconsin is actually in easy reach of the Chicago metro area.

The descriptions of Clampitt's personal experiences in various sites often highlight the excellent work of engagement and public history presented by site interpreters, historic crafts persons, and docents. Her own professional insights as a food historian provide specific comments on the culinary aspects of various visits, including a couple of recipes.

A deeper evaluation of the interpretive content of each site is outside the scope of this book. In recent years many museums, historic sites, and public historians have been actively reviewing and reconsidering how they tell their stories and whose voices are represented. Readers who seek to learn about each site's involvement with diversity and inclusion efforts or its engagement with Indigenous voices may wish to pursue additional sources for information about how recently those interpretations have been updated.

Overall, Clampitt has provided a welcome resource for history buffs and midwestern travelers. Her descriptions offer a personal perspective of how to experience a site, how much time and energy each place requires, and where to be sure to visit the gift shop. She offers tips for further resources, such as online searches for local and state historical societies, and encourages travelers to pay attention to road signs and historical markers. Even a well-traveled fan of midwestern history is likely to find a new itinerary in the pages of *Destination Heartland*.

*A Failed Vision of Empire: The Collapse of Manifest Destiny, 1845–1872*, by Daniel J. Burge. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2022. xvii, 246 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$55.83 hardcover.

Reviewer Matthew D. McDonough is Senior Lecturer of History at Coastal Carolina University. He specializes in westward expansion and American military history.

Daniel J. Burge's first published book, *A Failed Vision of Empire*, is an outstanding addition to the historiography of America's westward expansion. Burge takes on one of the most enduring myths of American history, that Manifest Destiny was both a popular ideology and hugely successful, and he conclusively demonstrates that it was never universally followed, nor did it live up to the grandiose visions of its proponents. Summing up his well-reasoned argument, Burge concludes that "Manifest Destiny was left unfulfilled, except in the pages of most history books" (180).