

*Prairie Dog Empire: A Saga of the Shortgrass Prairie*, by Paul A. Johnsgard. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005. xiii, 243. Maps, illustrations, tables, notes, appendix, index. \$29.95 cloth.

Reviewer Michael J. Brodhead is a historian with the Office of History, U. S. Army Corps of Engineers. He has written books and articles on naturalists in the nineteenth-century West.

The Great Plains, or shortgrass prairie, is America's least understood and least appreciated region. A common—and erroneous— notion of the Great Plains is that it is a vast area taking in the middle third of the United States. The author of this excellent work, a professor of biological sciences, knows better, having studied and written extensively about the region (which does not include Iowa). His central character is the black-tailed prairie dog, but many animals associated with it receive extensive treatment. These include other species of prairie dog, the bison, badger, bobcat, coyote, and raptors such as the golden eagle. An appendix provides "A Guide to National Grasslands, Reservations, and Nature Preserves on the High Plains."

Much of the engagingly written book details the shrinking of the territories of prairie dogs and their allies and predators and the sharp decline in their populations (the coyote being an exception). Of course, the principal cause is human settlement and exploitation of the region. Although never strident, Johnsgard makes it clear that most of the blame rests with ranching, mining, and timber interests, along with compliant state and federal agencies and lawmakers that have not provided adequate protection.

Many scientists and historians have written about the natural history of the Great Plains, but few so compellingly as Paul Johnsgard.

*The New Town Square: Museums and Communities in Transition*, by Robert R. Archibald. American Association for State and Local History Book Series. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004. viii, 224 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$69.00 cloth, \$24.95 paper.

Reviewer Terry A. Barnhart is associate professor of history at Eastern Illinois University, where he teaches courses in public history. He has also published articles about museum management.

A common theme in the practice of local history in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has been one of anomie—a growing sense of alienation and estrangement from the places that collectively make up the American past and present. Robert R. Archibald forcibly addresses this phenomenon in the *New Town Square: Museums and Communities in Transition*. "The most profound dilemma of this new century, inher-

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