

Civil War buffs, historians, and others who share an interest in America's defining conflict should be very grateful to Garold Cole for his latest bibliography. *Civil War Eyewitnesses* is a compilation of 596 works published between 1986 and 1996. These works comprise letters, diaries, memoirs, and other writings, all by participants in or observers of the conflict. These writings either had never been published before 1986 or were previously published only in the nineteenth or early twentieth century in editions that have long been unavailable. Like Cole's previous bibliography, which covered similar writings published between 1955 and 1986, this work casts a wide net, including not only books but also articles from state and local historical society journals and national journals specializing in the Civil War.

Cole provides much more than a mere listing of publications. His often extended annotations provide valuable information for researchers. The annotations identify individuals, summarize their activities, and offer a glimpse of the writers' feelings and attitudes about the war and themselves. It is puzzling, however, that while many annotations are very full and helpful, others are very brief and of almost no use whatsoever. The arrangement of the main body of this work is simple and not too helpful, but a very full index that lists items by state troops and battles, as well as by author, editor, title, and subject largely makes up for the rudimentary classification of the main list.

For those interested in Iowans in the Civil War, this bibliography will unfortunately provide fairly meager fare, as it includes only 13 items pertaining to 11 Iowa regiments. All in all, though, this is a significant contribution to the ongoing task of Civil War bibliography and will be a valuable tool for anyone seriously interested in the Civil War.

Letters of a German American Farmer: Jürnjakob Swehn Travels to America, by Johannes Gillhoff, translated by Richard L. A. Trost. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000. xvi, 180 pp. Illustrations, index. \$32.95 cloth, \$16.95 paper.

Reviewer Linda Schelbitzki Pickle is head of the Department of Modern Languages and Intercultural Studies at Western Kentucky University. She is author of *Contented among Strangers: Rural German-Speaking Women and Their Families in the Nineteenth Century American Midwest* (1996).

For more than 80 years a minor classic among German speakers, the letters of the fictional composite figure Jürnjakob Swehn have now been translated into English. The letters are based on the actual correspondence that Johannes Gillhoff's father, a Mecklenburg schoolmaster, received from more than 200 former pupils who emigrated to America.

Scholars have established with some degree of certainty that one of these, Iowa immigrant farmer Carl Wiedow, was the primary inspiration for Swehn. Be that as it may, the letters give a lively and convincing picture of German-speakers' experience as immigrants in the rural Midwest.

The book's scholarly and historical value resides in precisely the representative aspect of Swehn's epistolary narrative. As he uses his letters to sum up his life after several decades in America, Swehn also offers a portrait of the commonsensical German peasant *cum* midwestern farmer who relishes the freedom of thought and the economic opportunities of the new world. The particular conditions of frontier life and society, often centered in the rural immigrant church, are interesting in themselves. But they are also occasions to record timelessly amusing and fascinating human frailties.

In his translation, Trost communicates the sometimes coarse but always humorously down-to-earth and slyly ironic quality of the original text. He also succeeds in approximating the tone and texture of the original's mixture of dialect and standard German as he attempts to reinvent "that old-timey farm talk" (xv) that he knew from his own youth among the descendants of immigrants. Trost has given the wider American public access to an endearing book, one that contains significant insights into both the general immigrant experience and that of a particular group of a certain time and place.

Insane Sisters: Or, the Price Paid for Challenging a Company Town, by Gregg Andrews. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999. xii, 262 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 cloth.

Reviewer (Margaret) Dorsey Phelps is an independent scholar from Iowa City, Iowa. Her dissertation was "The Political Economy of Prison Labor during Depressions in Chicago, 1871-1897" (University of Iowa, 1992).

Insane Sisters is a story about a dispute over a 26-acre tract of land in Ilasco, an unincorporated industrial town in Ralls County, Missouri. The contest for control of land adjacent to the Atlas Portland Cement Company plant went on for 17 years, 1910-1927, and involved an extended series of court cases as well as a complex cast of colorful characters. Although Andrews suggests, both by the title and in the text, that the two sisters at the center of this story contested the ownership of this property in order to prevent the company from dominating life in Ilasco, in truth, their purpose was much more self-interested—they were out to protect property (even from each other if need be) that

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