

Book Reviews

edited by Michael D. Gibson

Out Here on Soap Creek: An Autobiography, by Inez McAlister Faber. Ames: The Iowa State University Press, 1982. pp. 180. Illustrations. \$12.95.

In 1927 Inez Faber, an Appanoose County farm wife, began to write news articles for the nearby Centerville *Iowegian* and later for the Des Moines *Register* and *Tribune*. Soon she turned to feature stories and then to regular columns for these newspapers and also for those in the neighboring communities of Albia, Blakesburg, and Moravia. Faber continued to pen her comments on rural life until suffering a vehicle accident in 1951.

The bulk of this work is a potpourri of pieces that Faber did for the Des Moines papers during the 1930s and early 1940s. The book's title, *Out Here on Soap Creek*, refers to the Faber family's farm home after the early thirties, located in the often rugged "pot and kettle" country of Urbana Township in southeastern Monroe County. The subjects that this self-proclaimed "Soap Creeker" covers are wide ranging, from family relationships to the cycles of farm life during these generally troubled years.

Out Here on Soap Creek makes fascinating reading. While a few passages seem out of place, others are magnificent. Perhaps the choicest one is a vivid description of the hectic Saturday night shopping in Albia, the county seat, before the first day of school. It captures both a dimension of Middle Border life that has virtually disappeared and a memorable annual ritual for farm families. Unfortunately, though, the work offers little about the Fabers' economic affairs and their over-all political attitudes during the New Deal era. This reviewer, also a Monroe County native, found it amazingly easy to visualize the places and events related. But best of all, the reader does not need to have hailed from southern Iowa to grasp what it meant to live on Soap Creek four and five decades ago.

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