

sion and persistence that careful readers can discern as applicable to a better understanding of the complexity and diversity of American history and culture.

*Ormanville: Life on the Iowa Frontier, 1850–1900*, by Silvano A. Wueschner. Ottumwa: St. Andrew's Publishing, 1993. xi, 204 pp. Illustrations, tables, notes, appendix, bibliography, index. \$22.95 cloth, \$12.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY KAY J. CARR, SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY AT CARBONDALE

*Ormanville: Life on the Iowa Frontier* is a classic story of the rise and fall of an American community. Founded in the mid-nineteenth century by "Old German Protestants" from Pennsylvania (by way of North Carolina, Tennessee, and Indiana), Ormanville boomed for twenty-five years, then slowly languished and, finally, fell into obscurity. By 1900 the town had disappeared from the maps of Wapello County, even though descendants of its original families continued to live in the area. Silvano A. Wueschner attributes the town's relatively short life span to its inhabitants' inability to make the transition from a "community steeped in subsistence agriculture" to one that was surrounded by a "nascent market oriented society" (x). This book's story is not, however, a tragedy. Rather, it is a celebration of the Iowa pioneers' "commitment, thrift, and accomplished agricultural skill" (49) in the early years of the state's settlement.

The strength of Wueschner's account is in its application of social history methods to a study of rural Iowa. The author uses state and county records, United States censuses, local newspapers, and early Wapello County histories from the late nineteenth century to recreate—in considerable detail—the flavor and rhythm of the lives of the town's settlers. Over the past twenty-five years, American historians have mined such local records in order to illustrate the social dynamics within individual communities. Beginning with colonial New England towns during the 1970s, historians have slowly made their way westward and have begun to examine the social processes within the more typically American rural neighborhoods of the country. Wueschner successfully illustrates and explains the traditional rules and modern regulations that governed the important interactions in rural Ormanville: land settlement and transfers, farm establishment and building, school construction and curricula, grist and saw mill operations, road construction, inheritance procedures, mercantile activity, and medical practices.

The author contends that Ormanville—which was never officially incorporated as a town—failed to survive into the twentieth century because its original German Protestant founders could no longer re-

main isolated and cohesive in the face of "modernizing influences" (186). He argues that the later settlers to the community—the "New German" Catholics and their Yankee neighbors—brought processed consumer goods, a secular school system, and a cash economy to the town. The traditional Germans, who were members of the United Brethren of Christ, tried to ward off the influences and values of the newcomers; they continued to speak German and even listed their Iowa-born children as "German" on public birth certificates. In the end, however, the old settlers were unable to resist the conveniences and benefits of the changing American economic and cultural environments. The rapidly expanding mercantile economy offered new consumer goods and demanded tax payments, both of which required cash interactions within the community. The children of the old settlers were particularly susceptible to the romances of the modern world because they went to school with their new neighbors and learned to read and write in the English language. Wueschner's argument is convincing, although he is not altogether successful in proving that the "Old Germans" resisted the changes that took place in late nineteenth-century Ormanville; the information that is available on the community may not be sufficient to prove that the old settlers were not active participants in the implementation of those very changes.

Overall, this a very well-researched, well-written, and useful book. It is a compelling story of one frontier community that might be used to illustrate larger trends in American economic and social development in the late nineteenth century. It would have been more appealing to scholars of American history if it had included a map that located the town in the state of Iowa. And the professional community would have been better served if the author had employed a more rigorous footnoting style, giving the sources of his information on both the general and specific facts of his study.

*To Reap a Bountiful Harvest: Czech Immigration Beyond the Mississippi, 1850–1900*; by Štěpánka Korytová-Magstadt. Iowa City: Rudi Publishing, 1993. xxiv, 179 pp. Illustrations, maps, charts, notes, appendixes, bibliography, index. \$24.95 cloth, \$14.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY NELLIE W. KREMENAK, UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

This study represents a welcome step in further documenting the history of a small but culturally significant midwestern ethnic group, the Czechs. Although the signposts of their rich communal life remain around us in the Czech halls, the tiny country Bohemian cemeteries, and churches named for St. Wenceslaus, only a few studies of their

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