

about 3,500 acres near Tama that their ancestors began to purchase in 1856; "because the tribal acreage near Tama was purchased by the Mesquakies with their own funds, the settlement is Indian land but not a 'reservation'" (210).

The scholarly backgrounds of historian R. David Edmunds and linguist Joseph L. Peyser complement one another in this superb ethnohistory, a method that combines ethnology and history. This volume supplements one written by William T. Hagan (*The Sac and Fox Indians* [1958, 1980]), who concentrated mostly on the Sacs and on the nineteenth century. The authors rather convincingly revise current scholarship on several issues concerning the Fox. For example, they place the Foxes in Wisconsin earlier than do other specialists. They also take issue with Richard White's assertion (*The Middle Ground* [1991], 140) that Algonquian Indians were not dependent on European trade goods; Edmunds and Peyser contend that the Foxes were convinced that they needed firearms to defend themselves from the Sioux (their most worrisome traditional enemy), and they also hoped to prevent those enemies from obtaining European weapons. Finally, the authors employ documentary evidence to challenge the archeologically preferred location for the battle of 1730.

Edmunds and Peyser explain that the antagonistic attitude of the Foxes toward the French, which was so different from the cooperative approach adopted by other Central Algonquian peoples, was the consequence of three factors: intertribal enmity, primarily Fox hostilities with the Chippewas and the Sioux; French economic opportunism, capitalizing specifically on a Fox fear that the Sioux would obtain firearms; and French colonial rivalries, especially New France's loss of the Illinois country to Louisiana. They also conclude that the Foxes survived the French effort to exterminate them because they maintained traditional tribal values and because they "possessed a tough resilience, a heartwood of inner strength that enabled them to cling to their sense of identity" (221).

Iowans who augment their personal libraries with even one volume devoted to an area tribe should acquire *The Fox Wars*.

*American Agriculture: A Brief History*, by R. Douglas Hurt. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1994. xii, 412 pp. Illustrations, maps, suggested readings, appendix, bibliographical note, index. \$34.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY DONALD B. MARTI, INDIANA UNIVERSITY, SOUTH BEND

"Ideally," Douglas Hurt remarks in his introduction to *American Agriculture*, "a synthesis of American agricultural history should extend

through several volumes" (viii). But his ambitious survey of this country's entire farm experience, from its Native American origins to the present, fits into a single volume of comfortably large print. It carries a big load of geography, technology, economic development, politics, and farm life for its size, and bears it with admirable grace. Clear, lively, and beautifully illustrated, it is a fine textbook, a helpful reference tool, and a great pleasure to read from cover to cover.

Agricultural history inspires a respectful tone because farmers deserve respect for hard work and grand achievement. This book has that tone, but also recognizes that American agricultural history has been marred by "ruthless speculation, vicious racism, malicious corporate power, callous government policy, and incredible violence" (viii). With all of that in mind, with both admiration and well-supported criticism, the book concludes that farmers have experienced, still experience, and must anticipate a mixture of accomplishments and troubles.

Organized both chronologically and topically, the book's nine chapters begin with Native American agriculture and then examine each of the historical periods that followed European colonization. Within those periods it focuses, separately, on this country's regions. Special sections after three of the chapters consider agrarianism, the Civil War, and veterinary medicine. Occasionally, as in the six-page section on agrarianism, for example, a strongly interested reader may think that the presentation is a little too brief or a little too simple, but brevity and clarity nearly always serve the story well.

No footnotes indicate the sources of this book's abundant information, but its five-page note on the bibliographical guides to agricultural history will be helpful to readers who want to study further, as will be the lists of suggested readings that appear at the ends of chapters. The lists make many helpful suggestions, including venerable classics and recent publications, books and scholarly articles, and works on all of the many topics that belong to agricultural history. The lists are rarely exhaustive; readers with particular enthusiasms may think of missing items that they would like to see listed. But the lists will surely be helpful to everyone who wants to learn about any of the chapters' topics.

The book is also superbly illustrated. Photographs and other pictures from many collections, including Hurt's own and those of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, university archives, and state historical societies, really illustrate what the chapters explain. A photograph from the Montana Historical Society showing a 1914 teacher, her eight pupils, and their tiny school is one of the book's extraordinary charms. The four sentences that locate it in time and place, and

connect it to the text, add to its value. Other well-introduced photographs, especially those from state historical societies, make instructive and sometimes moving contributions.

The book's other merits include its brief and clear explanations of land tenure, some farm organizations, farm women's lives and labor, the special tragedies of southern farming for slaves and sharecroppers, the distinctive attributes of farming in other American regions, technological changes, and Native Americans' agricultural history. Some of Hurt's other works, notably *Indian Agriculture in America* (1987) and *Agricultural Technology in the Twentieth Century* (1991), are among the principal sources for those topics.

The book also offers brief biographical sketches of five agricultural leaders: George Washington Carver, John Deere, Mary Elizabeth Lease, Henry A. Wallace, and Eli Whitney. Surely those five people were well selected, but everyone interested in the history of American farming can think of more people who merit a little space in this book. Writing a single volume on a huge subject requires a certain discipline, but a few more biographical sketches would not have stretched the book's length sinfully. Perhaps—to take one example not quite at random—Mary Mayo should be in the next edition. Her inclusion would increase the book's attention to women, the Grange, and Michigan.

Michigan, Indiana, Minnesota, and some other states get little space in this book. Iowa does far better, as it should in a history of American agriculture. George Washington Carver studied at the Iowa Agricultural College, now Hurt's Iowa State University. Henry A. Wallace was an Iowan and a graduate of his state's agricultural college. Veterinary medicine, discussed in a fascinating section between the sixth and seventh chapters, had "complete schools" (285) in only four institutions, including Iowa Agricultural College, at the beginning of this century. Milo Reno, an Iowan who had been a Populist, organized the Farmers' Holiday Association, which fought a losing battle in 1932. Containing all of that and more, this book offers fine opportunities to learn, or be reminded of, some important facts about Iowa. But perhaps the Midwest in general should have received a little more attention. Still, the book is a national history of agriculture that needs to give fair shares of attention to all of our regions, and certainly does that, particularly for California and the South.

*American Agriculture* covers its big subject superbly, excluding none of its major aspects. Its fine bibliographies, splendid illustrations, and always clear and readable text are well worth some pleasant, stimulating hours of reading and many later consultations.

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