

lesson of Miller's book is that the landscape of the Midwest and the small towns on it tell us much of this nation's history if we go to these places and meet people in their immediate surroundings. Indeed, *Highway 14* could be a useful guide for the traveler who wants to venture onto this two-laner and learn something about small-town America.

*They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School*, by K. Tsianina Lomawaima. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994. xviii, 205 pp. Illustrations, maps, tables, appendixes, notes, index. \$25.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY S. CAROL BERG, COLLEGE OF ST. BENEDICT

Boarding schools always present the problem of making an institution into a home. Chilocco Indian School in north central Oklahoma is a case in point. K. Tsianina Lomawaima's study of life at Chilocco for several thousand Indian children during the 1920s and 1930s makes clear that "comprehensive power wielded by [a] few adults compromised any flowering of surrogate parenting" (56). Alumni narratives, which constitute the bulk of her study, confirm this conclusion.

Founded in 1884 and closed in 1980, Chilocco flourished from the start. Enrollments were 352 in 1895, and annual enrollment ranged from two to three hundred into the early 1900s. By the 1920s, eight hundred to a thousand boarders was the norm. Oklahoma supplied most of the students; others came primarily from Kansas, Mississippi, and Iowa.

An agricultural school, Chilocco emphasized farming and industrial training, at times slighting academics. Work skills were valued as highly as or even above academics. One alumnus summed up a major goal of the school: "The one thing, if you didn't learn anything else, was to learn to work" (76). Many alumni noted the discipline and hard work as having been beneficial to them when they left Chilocco; others criticized what they saw as a lack of solid academic offerings.

In 1983-84 Lomawaima interviewed 61 people, 53 of them Chilocco alumni (32 women, 21 men) representing 14 tribes, among them Kiowa, Miami, Omaha, Comanche, Potawatomi, Chippewa, and Creek (the majority were Cherokee). With a mix of tribes, ages, languages, and degree of Indian blood, these Chilocco students created subcultures as survival tactics, carrying out overt and covert forms of resistance to authority. The regimentation and uniformity of life at Chilocco were countered by peer friendships and loyalty; gangs often provided protection and a sense of family. Ironically, both pan-Indianism and

tribal identity were reinforced as diverse tribal groups were forced into close contact. A camaraderie developed, uniting students in "a complex web of support and mutual respect" (44).

The alumni narratives that are the heart of this book vividly conjure up an image of a time and place when federal policies attempted to transform Indian children into the mainstream American ideal: farmers and Christians. But outwitting the system became almost an art, and the alumni responses show that, at the least, the ideal was resisted much of the time. Alumni reminiscences include tales of theft (mainly of food), alcohol abuse (making of home brew), running away, and efforts to retain ties to home cultures, evident in such activities as stomp dancing, parching corn, and chewing peyote (140). Nevertheless, there are some kind words about the social training and educational opportunity made available to them. As one put it, "I learned more there, maybe not academically, but overall, to take care of myself" (163).

Lomawaima concludes her analysis of Chilocco with the observation that "no institution is total, no power is all-seeing" (164). Her interviews bear this out, revealing diverse experiences of the Indian students and their sometimes successful attempts to maintain some control over their lives. She pictures the students as active participants, creating a world for themselves within the confines of an alien system and structure (167).

*They Called It Prairie Light* will interest readers in the Midwest, where many Indian boarding schools operated between 1890 and 1940. Unfortunately, few studies about them have been published, a real gap in local and state history. Lomawaima's work should help stimulate research into these institutions.

*Science with Practice: Charles E. Bessey and the Maturing of American Botany*, by Richard A. Overfield. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1993. xiii, 262 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$37.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY DANIEL GOLDSTEIN, IOWA CITY, IOWA

Charles Edwin Bessey (1845-1915) was one of those people who seems to have possessed more than the usual amount of energy and, what is more, knew how to use it constructively. Bessey helped revolutionize science education in this country both by being one of the first scientists to make work with a microscope a regular part of classroom instruction and by writing a botanical text for high school students structured according to the principles of "the new botany" of the late nineteenth century. He also helped to shape two land-grant colleges:

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