

THE ANNALS OF IOWA

and 1850 provide clarity for the events discussed, and there are several other maps and tables for illustration. The footnotes appear at the bottom of the page for ready reference. The bibliography is comprehensive and reveals very wide research in monographs, journal articles, theses and dissertations, frontier newspapers, and, interestingly, in county histories.

The only detraction in what is otherwise a superb work is the appearance, far too often, of typographical errors. When the first ones appeared, this reviewer resolved to refrain from nit-picking, but when on page 388 the word "admitted" appeared instead of "admired" on one line and the word "appointed" on the very next line, the resolution vanished. Scholars have come to expect better from the Oxford University Press.

Professor Rohrbough's very scholarly and readable contribution will be useful as a college text as well as being of interest to the general reader. He takes his pioneers from the world of "vast spaces, few people, marginal communication, and subsistence agriculture" in 1775 to "one based on a cash economy and interdependence" by 1850. He especially describes how the frontier of the east kept the frontiersmen "from creating finished societies." This is a good book.

Brigham D. Madsen
The University of Utah
Salt Lake City, UT

The Urban West at the End of the Frontier, by Lawrence H. Larsen. Lawrence: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1978. pp. xiii, 173. \$12.50.

As the dustcover suggests, Lawrence H. Larsen's *The Urban West at the End of the Frontier* is an analytical study, but not a full-blown history of urbanization in the West in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. For the most part, it is an interpretive analysis of an impressive mass of quantitative information, largely from the single year 1880, from *Report of the Social Statistics of Cities (Tenth Census of the United States, 1880)* published in 1886. From the extracted information, Lar-

Book Reviews

sen constructs a fairly precise picture of twenty-four Western urban centers in various stages of development. All of them had populations of 8,000 or more (circa 1880), and all are located west of the 95th meridian, ranging from Kansas City (Missouri) in the East to San Francisco in the West, and Galveston in the South to Portland in the Northwest. Larsen compares these urban centers as a group and with eastern cities of comparable size in population and demography, location, design and layout, architecture, health and sanitation practices, police and fire protection, and transportation facilities.

The strongest chapters are the second, "Demography, Society, and Economics" (seven tables are included); the third, "Improving the Environment;" and the sixth, "The Application of Technology." This latter chapter would have been helped, however, by the inclusion of transportation maps illustrating the importance of railroads, inland river traffic, and ocean commerce to urban center locations.

The major theoretical framework is posed in the introductory chapter, which recounts the schemes of western town "boomer" William Gilpin. The last chapter tallies the number of Gilpin's prophecies which became realities. This particular organizing idea seems fresh and viable. The invocation of Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier determinism, is not. If Larsen wasn't responsible for this sin of inclusion, he should have resisted whoever was.

A major problem with this study is the author's assumption that his readers should believe that the results of western town-building should have or could have been different from their eastern precedents. How anyone could retain that notion after having read a few of the more readable urban histories, including Richard C. Wade's *The Urban Frontier*, is a mystery. Further, Larsen cannot be serious in suggesting that the thousands of promoters, businessmen, and working people engaged in town-building really believed that "a West in which the cities would look and function the same as those in the East appeared an unlikely possibility." When the data of urban physical measurements are isolated into tables, the conclusion is transparently obvious: western cities weren't all that different from contemporary eastern cities of comparable size. Other similarities

THE ANNALS OF IOWA

were also apparent. Western urban design, for example, copied the gridiron pattern almost slavishly despite local topography. Portland, located on high bluffs overlooking the Willamette River, resembled Des Moines, a prairie city, in design in 1880. Stockton, California was designed as a perfect square, eleven blocks by eleven blocks, for a total of 122 blocks. The West displayed the same architectural eclecticism prevalent in the East. A comparison of park systems showed a nearly equal record of success and failure, East and West. Why, then, does Larsen berate the West for lacking originality in city design, architecture, and parks? He strains the point, particularly after a strong chapter on population and demography in which he notes that over half the largest cities' populations came from other states (and nations). If the populations were drawn from elsewhere, including the East, is it any surprise that the civil engineers and businessmen who planned and laid out the cities copied what they knew?

In the category of minor annoyances, the study would have been helped by an early definition of terms. The author uses "city" and "town" interchangeably. Would it not be possible for a reader to assume that a "town" goes through stages of growth and development to become a "city?" Also, Larsen doesn't define what "frontier" means to him. He consistently refers to the twenty-four urban centers as "frontier towns," although a place containing 8,000 or more in population is presumably no longer in the center nor on the fringes of a frontier.

The real value of this study is seeing how the Western urban centers condensed the town-building experience to best their rivals and to gain the approbation of the urban East, the chief source of their inspiration.

John E. Pilcher
Stillwater, OK

Grant Wood and Marvin Cone. Artists of An Era, by Hazel E. Brown. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1972. pp. xi, 150, Illus., \$6.95.

Cedar Rapids, Iowa was a place hospitable to those who

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.