

THE ANNALS OF IOWA

older merchant capitalism and to the emergence of a national economy centered more on domestic rather than foreign trade. Finally, Stover asserts, these arteries forged a political, economic, and cultural alliance between the Northwest and the states of the Old Northwest—an extremely important fact in view of the coming Civil War.

Stover's chapters deal with the railroads at midcentury; with them in the various geographic sections of the country during the 1850s; with their victories over road, canal, and steamboat; with various technical advances; and with them on the eve of the war. Most of his information comes from a rich lode of secondary sources; the book's great contribution derives from the author's brilliant synthesis of that material. Inevitably, a great body of data and factual information has found its way into each chapter. Just as inevitably, this has made for dry narrative. Yet such material is the warp and woof of any historical analysis.

Iron Road to the West is essential reading for any serious student of American railroad and economic history as well as for those who would seek to understand the broad fabric of the nation in that crucial era immediately prior to the Civil War. General readers and rail buffs also will profit from the book.

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To God Be the Glory: The Mennonite Witness in Iowa City, 1927-1977, by Gordon M. Miller. Iowa City: First Mennonite Church of Iowa City, 1977. pp. 177. Illustrations, bibliography, notes. No price paper.

To God Be the Glory is a history of the first fifty years of the Mennonite congregation in Iowa City written as part of an anniversary celebration. As such, the book is addressed primarily to the Mennonite membership, but Miller consciously avoids a frequent pitfall of local historians who ignore the larger historical context in which their subjects acted. In his foreword, Miller states that he is attempting "where possible, to make notation of how outside events affected the life and actions of the congregation." (p. 5) This he does. The book is a well-documented chronology of the struggle of a small mission through the financial crisis of the 1930s and the war years.

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What is lacking in Miller's account, at least to an outside reader, is not the historical context in which the events took place but how the Mennonite traditions and perspectives influenced the group's response to those events. For example, Miller spends only two pages covering the impact of World War II on the Iowa City congregation and even in this, his major emphasis is on church finances. Without further elaboration, he quotes from a report by the congregation's minister that "a few families object to their children attending Sunday School because of the stand our church is taking on the war problem." (p. 42) What was that stand? How did the public respond to it? Above all, how did Mennonite traditions and beliefs influence the way Iowa City members experienced the war years? Miller does not deal with these questions.

Similarly, Miller briefly summarizes the church's confrontation with the Vietnam conflict in three paragraphs. Neil Carman, a draft protester who was not himself a Mennonite, asked the congregation "if he could use the church building sanctuary as a symbolic refuge when the government came to arrest him." (p. 76) The congregation granted him permission, but Miller gives few details about the discussion within the group or community response to the action. These events deserve more elaboration.

Miller has done an excellent job of writing the history of an institution, the Mennonite congregation in Iowa City. He has carefully examined the minutes of congregation meetings, official reports, financial records, and denomination publications. However, perhaps a more significant dimension to the history of the congregation is not found in official records. The full title of Miller's work is *To God Be the Glory: The Mennonite Witness in Iowa City, 1927-1977*. The essence of witness is the way that the church's beliefs influence the lives of its members, what they believe, and how they act. Fortunately, the congregation has begun an oral history program to preserve the individual perspective as well as the institutional record. Miller notes that ten members were interviewed and their tapes preserved. *To God Be the Glory* might profitably have utilized these oral histories to broaden its perspective beyond the institutional records.

The Iowa City congregation is fortunate to have Miller's work. *To God Be the Glory* provides an excellent introduction to the record of the first fifty years.

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