

THE ANNALS OF IOWA

kans learned to adapt to the environment, to change it, and to some extent control it for their benefit, helps to explain the Nebraska psyche.

Those who seek the political history of Nebraska must look elsewhere. Some of the highlights emerge to illustrate salient features of the Nebraska character, but for the most part, this book ignores politics. The brief chapter on the populists is included largely for what it says about Nebraskans' response to the environmental and economic conditions of the late nineteenth century. The chapter on towns deals mostly with their role during the settlement period prior to 1890. The significance of urban factors in Nebraska life, particularly in the twentieth century, is alluded to only briefly in the discussion of the years since World War II.

A few errors of fact or interpretation detract little from the value of the book. I question the account of General Harney's alleged mistreatment of Sioux women and children captured at the 1855 battle near Ash Hollow. (p. 75) Two pages later we find that "large numbers of soldiers were destroyed" by Indians at Beecher's Island in 1869 when in fact, white casualties were few.

It would be easy to criticize what this book omits about Nebraska if its object had been an exhaustive, scholarly study of state history. For those who want more, a list of suggested readings has been included. Many will find, however, that Mrs. Creigh's affectionate summary is an appropriate introduction to Nebraska and its people.

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The Queen City: A History of Denver, by Lyle W. Dorsett. Boulder, Colorado: Western Urban History Series, 1. Pruett Publishing Company, 1977. pp. xvi, 320. Illustrations, index. \$12.50.

This book claims to be "the first narrative and interpretive history" of the mile-high city. That may well be its highest commendation. Lyle W. Dorsett, professor of history at the University of Denver, has produced a work flawed by an inconsistent point of view and an unconvincing interpretation of two major Denver politicians.

The problem of inconsistency is inherent in the structure of the book. Each of the five chronological parts contains two chapters, the first devoted to leaders in the community and the second focused on what Dorsett calls "the quality of life." In theory, this kind of organization seems capable of giving the reader a picture of the decision-

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making process among business and governmental leaders, then the effects of those decisions on the community at large. In practice, this approach produced an unhappy marriage of history "from the top, down" to history "from the bottom, up" that tended to break the continuity of the narrative, confusing the reader and clouding the author's interpretation in ambiguity. After the first two parts of the book, the reader is unsure how Dorsett views the creation of what urban historian Gunther Barth has described as "the instant city."

Dorsett's ambivalence disappears in the third part which deals with the early twentieth century. His position becomes clear when he defends Mayor Robert W. Speer against charges that he was a political "boss." Dorsett denies this characterization, choosing instead to view this politician as a "master broker" who "was blessed with the political acumen which enabled him to bridge the gulfs between conflicting groups by winning their confidence and then persuading each that they must compromise with others if any were to prosper and survive." (p. 130) Prosper and survive Speer did. A Democrat who rose from the city clerk's office to the police and fire commission before becoming mayor, "Speer accepted the inevitability of prostitution and befriended the saloon and gambling element," writes Dorsett. "He was especially [sic] close to its czar, Ed Chase while commissioner." (pp. 131-133) A great compromiser, indeed. Dorsett gives a curious interpretation to Speer's efforts in 1903 to defeat a new city charter backed by Denver's reform groups. His opponents charged that Speer sold out to the interests of the corporations that controlled the municipal utility monopolies. According to Dorsett, the "facts" are otherwise. "In effect, Speer did not say, 'I can be bought.' On the contrary, he said, 'I'll help you survive if you help me survive,'" writes Dorsett. (p. 135) Even if the reader accepts this narrow distinction, the "facts" unfortunately cannot be verified since the book has no footnotes. Dorsett concedes that Speer and his organization were instrumental in getting out the vote. He also acknowledges that a post-election investigation of the voting lists turned up "over one thousand names of deceased or unidentifiable residents on the lists in 1903." (p. 137) But about this incident Dorsett concludes, "Such corrupt practices were certainly unnecessary. Without the illegal votes, the charter was defeated by over 6,000 votes." (p. 137)

Dorsett equally admires Mayor Benjamin Franklin Stapleton, who was first elected in 1923 and whose career is the focus of the fourth part of the book. Stapleton was the political, and perhaps the spiritual, heir to Speer. "Stapleton himself was no bigot," Dorsett writes. (p. 203) Nevertheless, Stapleton's election was assured by his personal

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endorsement of the Ku Klux Klan which was a significant political force in the city in the early twenties. Stapleton rewarded the Klan for its return endorsement by appointing a prominent klansman chief of police. Although he repudiated the Klan after its influence had waned, Stapleton continued to actively seek aid from "the gambling, saloon, and red-light proprietors" who had supported Mayor Speer. (p. 206)

The problem is not that Dorsett favors bossism; rather, it is that he has failed to provide sufficient evidence to convince the reader of the validity of his interpretation. Presumably, the "quality of life" chapters were intended to justify the less savory aspects of bossism, but they are not persuasive. Dorsett is an acknowledged authority on big city politics with several books to his credit including *The Pendergast Machine* (1968) and *Bosses and Machines in Urban America* (1974). However, the thirteen-page bibliographic note is small consolation for the lack of footnote references to the documentary evidence in this work. Dorsett interviewed people important to Denver's past too. It would be useful to know where this material was used.

This omission suggests that the publishers have aimed the book toward a general audience. They certainly have sprinkled the text liberally with photographs that are useful to layman and scholar alike. No doubt the need for general histories of the major cities in the West exists, but the flaws in this book spell an ominous beginning to the publisher's proposed Western Urban History Series.

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A Long, Deep Furrow: Three Centuries of Farming in New England, by Howard S. Russell. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1976. pp. xvi, 672. Maps, illustrations, notes, bibliography, and index. \$18.50.

This study of agriculture in New England is a comprehensive treatment of a subject that is encyclopedic in nature. Howard S. Russell has gleaned information from the many town and county histories of the region, as well as from memoirs, biographies and manuscripts of many persons familiar with various aspects of growth and changes in New England farming over three centuries. The result is a very readable and important contribution to the history of agriculture.

The author starts his story with New England's first farmers, the Indians. They had cleared the land, developed crops, and contributed their knowledge to help make the efforts of the first English settlers

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