

THE ANNALS OF IOWA

Thee for this food and bless it to our use and to Thy service. For Christ's sake, Amen.'

It was that kind of humor, adding its wonderful bit to the appreciation of God's land and God's creatures that enabled the Artleys to defy the Great Depression and its attempt to flatten all before it.

Artley's book is like many others now appearing which depend on nostalgia for their appeal. The reader, in his own way, relates to what Artley and those like him write, and that takes them back to the pleasant days of their own kidhood. Which, in Iowa, meant happiness.

Probably best of all are Artley's paragraphs about his parents. His mother, fun-loving, who wrapped corn cobs in Babe Ruth candy covers and put them in the school lunch boxes; his father, who delayed the clearing of a small grove until a bird could hatch her eggs.

Artley's final chapter is devoted to his desire to be a cartoonist, and to the awe-filled visit to the great Ding, the cartoonist for all Iowa, at his studio at the Des Moines Register. But, he does not reveal that he himself, Bob Artley, later also was a cartoonist on the Des Moines Register, an associate of Ding, who expressed to this reviewer (also on the Register) his respect for the abilities of Bob Artley.

**John M. Henry
Des Moines, IA**

Nebraska, A History, by Dorothy Weyer Creigh. New York: W. W. Norton, and Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1977. pp. xvi, 220. Illustrations, maps, notes, suggestions for further reading, index. \$9.95.

Each author of the volumes in the AASLH States and the Nation Series was charged with capturing the essence of his state, with defining and interpreting those qualities in the land and the people which give the state identity. In *Nebraska, A History*, Dorothy Weyer Creigh has done just that. Mrs. Creigh's fondness for her native state and her interest in its history made her well-suited for this task. The scholar will find no new facts here, nor will this volume replace standard Nebraska history texts. Yet this summary offers insights about Nebraska and Nebraskans which may be absent from more detailed studies.

Creigh's view of Nebraska centers around man's relationship to the land. Little that is significant about the state does not relate in some way to how the land has been occupied and utilized by succeeding generations of Nebraskans. She sees this relationship as the touchstone of Nebraska's development.

Book Reviews

The first chapter, "The Nebraska Psyche," is in many ways the most interesting and most central to the goal of the States and Nation Series. Here the author defines what she feels are the essential elements in the Nebraska character. We are conservative, frugal, slow to change, practical, imaginative, emotional about the land, stubborn, friendly, and, in many ways, contradictory. Politically conservative Nebraskans elected George Norris, "the fighting liberal," to Congress for forty years, and pioneered the initiative and referendum, the unicameral legislature, and public power. Nebraskans are wary of government intervention yet they have accepted federal assistance in a variety of forms, ranging from homestead land grants to current agricultural price supports. Nebraskans supposedly are not given to artistic endeavors, yet they completed an architecturally innovative state capitol in the midst of the depression of the 1930s and recently erected a series of abstract sculptures along the interstate highway. Mrs. Creigh suggests that some Nebraskans will scarcely spend a dollar to paint the barn, yet will invest thousands for machinery they believe necessary to their farming operations. They cuss the heat, the cold, the wind, and the rain or lack thereof, yet turn fiercely defensive when the state is criticized by outsiders. Many of us who live here will agree that Mrs. Creigh has called to mind much that seems familiar about ourselves.

Nebraska, A History follows the historical development of the state in a generally topical manner, beginning with the inhabitants, the Plains Indians. Succeeding chapters discuss exploration and overland travel, territorial and state government, the railroads, the towns, and the progress of settlement by homesteaders, cattlemen, and immigrants. Brief concluding chapters summarize recent decades in the state's history. A photographer's essay by Joe Munroe provides a look at contemporary Nebraska. The selection, however, inadequately reflects the diversity of Nebraska agriculture by including several photos relating to the livestock industry and virtually none relating to other farming activities.

For the most part, this book emphasizes Nebraska in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. How Nebraskans have dealt with the land and environment is the central theme which links the chapters. The sections on the homesteaders, farmers, cattlemen, and immigrants, relate some of the major factors which transformed Nebraska from the Great American Desert into the agricultural heartland of today. One is reminded of the Great Plains' harsh climate, the treeless prairies, the isolation, and other obstacles to wresting a livelihood from the land. Mrs. Creigh suggests that the ways in which Nebras-

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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.

James E. Potter
Nebraska State Historical Society
Lincoln, NB

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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