

bound to old ways of doing things" (5). More convincing is her admission that Iowa parishes offered such poor livings that few men were interested in serving them. The account she provides of the suffrage struggle in Iowa lends meager support to her characterization of Iowa as a liberal frontier. Furthermore, the dichotomy that she sets up between the liberal West and the conservative East is problematic. Certainly Unitarian leadership was conservative, but it is a surprise to discover that several of the women ministers ended up their religious careers in the East.

Generally, one wishes Tucker had provided a richer context for her discussion. What was Iowa like in the 1880s and 1890s, and how was Unitarianism connected to religious life there? Were the Iowa ministers exceptional in making their churches centers for congregational life, or did other pastors, East or West, have similar visions for their churches? Had Tucker addressed such questions, it would be easier to set her analysis in perspective.

Tucker's desire to recover a forgotten part of religious life, to describe "inspiring human achievements and bravery," has resulted in an interesting book. Many of her insights are both useful and provocative and suggest directions for further research focused on the involvement of nineteenth-century women with Protestantism.

Cynthia Grant Tucker and Stow Persons shared the 1991 Benjamin Shambaugh Award from the State Historical Society of Iowa. The award recognized *Prophetic Sisterhood: Liberal Women Ministers of the Frontier, 1880-1930* and *The University of Iowa in the Twentieth Century: An Institutional History* as the most important books on Iowa history published in 1990.—Ed.

*The University of Iowa in the Twentieth Century: An Institutional History*, by Stow Persons. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1990. x, 341 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$32.50 cloth.

REVIEWED BY JOSEPH F. WALL, GRINNELL COLLEGE

In the preface to his history of the University of Iowa in the twentieth century, Stow Persons writes, "In ultimate terms, a university is a company of scholars and their students. The history of a university should ideally be an account of what was taught and what was learned" (ix). Any chronicler who has done the requisite research in college archives can provide an account of what courses have been taught

and the syllabi of those courses. A historian as perceptive as Stow Persons can even give the reader some understanding of *why* in addition to *what* particular courses have been taught. Persons's second objective—to describe what was learned by the students—must, however, remain an unattainable ideal. If only a teacher or an administrator could know with certainty what the students had learned from the curriculum offered them, we might have Cardinal Newman's ideal university at last fully defined. But while teaching is a social activity, learning is an individual experience. And so we shall continue to offer new programs of study, prescribe new requirements for graduation, and redefine the university's mission. It is this quest to discover both what is learned and what should be learned that gives to education its vitality, as Persons makes abundantly clear in this history.

Throughout his work, Persons keeps the focus on the University of Iowa. There are infrequent, direct comparative references to other state universities of the Middle West in respect to growth in enrollments, faculty salaries, and plant facilities, but it is the story of the University of Iowa that Persons with meticulous care and by exemplary research delineates for the reader. In less skillful hands, this monographic approach might have produced a parochial study of interest only to those directly associated with the University of Iowa. But so perceptively does Persons analyze the issues basic to higher education in the United States that there is not an administrator, teacher, student, or alumnus of any college or university in the country who could not relate the aspirations, controversies, and successes and failures at Iowa to his or her own institution. Apparently questions regarding the relative importance of research to teaching, of general education to departmental specialization, of administrative authority to participatory governance, and of established classical canons to "progressive" temporal readings are ubiquitous. By specific examples, Persons makes explicit the universals found in institutions of higher education: that most administrators are more innovative and less satisfied with the status quo than are most faculty members, who, in spite of their reputation for radicalism among the general public, are generally reluctant to change; that departmental autonomy is more important than collegial cooperation; that most plans for administrative reorganization are "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

This history deserves a larger reading audience than the academic community. The University of Iowa has been of central interest to Iowans throughout the history of this state. The First General Assembly in 1847 provided for a state university to be located in Iowa

City. Thus from their very beginnings, the history of the state and the history of its university have been inextricably intertwined. Over the years, the university has trained a large proportion of the state's doctors, lawyers, teachers, and governmental officials. What takes place in the classrooms (as well as on the athletic fields) of the university is of vital importance to all Iowans.

Persons has written his history in a style that holds the reader's attention. It is a story replete with colorful personalities. Although he has organized the material in the traditional chronological pattern of successive presidential administrations, Persons rightly emphasizes that frequently it is not the president of the institution but rather a subordinate who directs events and leaves the deeper impression on the historical record. One chapter is appropriately titled "Seashore's University," for Carl Seashore, who never held a position higher than Dean of the Graduate School, dominated the university for a quarter of a century. As Persons states, during the Seashore years President Walter Jessup (1916-1934) "reigned, but did not rule" (104).

Persons is more than a mere chronicler of events, though. He is also a critic who does not hesitate to pass judgment on those involved in the major issues of their day. There are no base villains in this history, but there are in Persons's considered judgment some weak, ineffective, obstinate, and sometimes obstructive major players. He is particularly critical of Virgil Hancher. This may come as a surprise to many readers, for Hancher held the presidency longer (1940-1964) and was probably better known throughout the state than any of the other sixteen presidents. Persons concedes that Hancher's responses to educational policies and goals were usually basically sound; yet although Hancher "could analyze a situation clearly [he] was incapable of moving forcefully and effectively to resolve the problem" (165). This lack of energy and resolution earns for Hancher's administration Persons's epithet, "The Inertial University." Persons does provide us with figures of heroic stature: William R. Boyd, who for many years was the university's much needed champion on the Board of Education and whose influence with Abraham Flexner probably saved the Medical College; Norman Foerster, the bold champion of general education; May Brodbeck, the very able academic vice-president from 1974 to 1983, to whose memory Persons dedicates his book; and the two great revivalists of the university's fortunes, Presidents George MacLean and Howard Bowen, who sought not uniqueness but greatness for their institution.

Persons departs from straight chronological organization in two chapters. "The Rise of the Medical College" is, I believe, the best chapter in the book. With great clarity, Persons makes understandable to

the outsider the inside personalities, issues, and conflicts of that professional college as it moved along its contorted path from near extinction to eminence in its field. The university's largest college, the College of Liberal Arts, receives similar analytical scrutiny in the chapter, "General Education." That college, however, never achieved the greatness envisioned for it by MacLean, Foerster, Bowen, and, in his own way, Dewey Stuit. Seashore praised what he called "creative anarchy" as being the climate that best promoted both academic freedom and academic excellence. In the College of Liberal Arts, unfortunately, there was always more anarchy than creativity. A few programs, such as the Writers' Workshop under Paul Engle, achieved both uniqueness and greatness, but the college's component parts would remain far greater than the combined whole.

Stow Persons expresses the hope in his preface that "someone may eventually produce a more comprehensive account of the university" for which his work may serve as a "starting point" (ix). In the areas upon which he concentrates, his *is* the comprehensive account that has long been needed. One major area, however, is curiously neglected. He gives almost no attention to the College of Law. One is at a loss to understand why that college should be so slighted. It has provided the university either directly or indirectly with three of its presidents in the twentieth century and has sent one of its deans, Wiley Rutledge, on to the United States Supreme Court to become an ally of Justices Douglas and Black in laying the foundations for the activist court of Earl Warren. Here remains one starting point for that comprehensive history of the University of Iowa that Professor Persons has called for and has very nearly provided.

*Children of the Mill: Schooling and Society in Gary, Indiana, 1906-1960*, by Ronald D. Cohen. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990. xiv, 296 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, index. \$35.00 cloth.

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The title of Professor Ronald D. Cohen's detailed, informative work is somewhat misleading; "children of the mill" are not the central focus of his study of schooling and society in Gary, Indiana, founded in 1906 as the site of the world's largest steel mill. Rather, Cohen traces the rise and fall of the Gary or Platoon School plan, a world-famous, controversial, yet widely copied progressive educational experiment. Cohen's major sources are the papers and publications of Superinten-

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