

## Book Reviews and Notices

*Samuel Mazzuchelli, American Dominican: Journeyman, Preacher, Pastor, Teacher*, by Mary Nona McGreal, O.P. Sinsinawa, WI: Mazzuchelli Guild, 2005. xviii, 339 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$16.00 paper.

Reviewer Timothy Walch is the director of the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and the author or editor of six books on American Catholic history.

Although little remembered today, Samuel Mazzuchelli was a member of a diligent band of Catholic missionaries who established churches, schools, hospitals, and asylums across the Midwest in the nineteenth century. Among Mazzuchelli's accomplishments was the establishment of numerous Catholic churches in what is now the state of Iowa.

He was born in Milan, Italy, on November 4, 1806, the youngest son of a local silk merchant. After a formal education in Switzerland, Mazzuchelli entered the Order of Preachers, the religious order better known as Dominicans after their founder, St. Dominic de Guzman. In 1827 he accepted a call to the missions in the United States. With the exception of one brief return to Italy in 1843–44, Mazzuchelli devoted the rest of his life to the emerging Catholic church in Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Iowa.

Of some interest to students of Iowa history are the chapters that detail Mazzuchelli's work among the communities of the upper Mississippi River. Not surprisingly, Mazzuchelli worked closely with the first bishop of Dubuque, Matthias Loras, to minister among the Catholics in his sprawling new diocese. From 1835 to 1843, Mazzuchelli traveled up and down the river planning and establishing churches and parishes among the small Catholic communities of Burlington, Bloomington, Davenport, Bellevue, and Garryowen among others.

In 1843 Mazzuchelli traveled with Loras to the Fifth Provincial Council of Baltimore and then returned to Europe to raise money and seek additional missionary priests. He spent the next year in Italy and France on that mission of mercy. He returned to the upper Midwest in June 1844 to focus special attention on the establishment of a Province of Dominican Sisters at Sinsinawa in southwest Wisconsin.

Mazzuchelli continued to travel throughout the Midwest until the year before his death in 1864. He worked with bishops in many mid-western dioceses to nurture their Catholic congregations, but he always returned to the communities he had founded in southwest Wisconsin. He died of a sudden illness on February 23, 1864, and is buried in Benton, Wisconsin.

This book is a labor of love in both the best and the worst sense of that overused phrase. It is a biography of a Dominican researched and written by a Dominican, and there is little question that the author admires Father Mazzuchelli's life and legacy. In fact, one of the implied purposes of the book is to advance the cause for Mazzuchelli's canonization as a Catholic saint. In that effort, the author was assisted by many other Dominicans who diligently searched for any and all documents related to Mazzuchelli's life and career.

The book is limited, therefore, by its hagiographical tone. It will be of modest value to general readers who are interested in the early history of the Catholic church in the upper Midwest, but it offers little to the scholarly study of the history of religion in the Midwest in general or in the state of Iowa in particular.

*The Bellevue War: Mandate of Justice or Murder by Mob: A True – and Still Controversial – Story of Iowa as the Wild West*, by Susan K. Lucke. Ames: McMillen Publishing, 2002. x, 414 pp. Illustrations, maps, appendixes, notes, bibliography, index. \$22.95 cloth.

Reviewer Michael J. Pfeifer teaches American history at the University of Western Ontario. He is the author of *Rough Justice: Lynching and American Society, 1874–1947* (2004) and “Law, Society, and Violence in the Antebellum Midwest: The 1857 Eastern Iowa Vigilante Movement” (*Annals of Iowa*, 2005).

The collective violence that erupted in Bellevue, Jackson County, in April 1840 has long interested historians of early Iowa. Popularly known as “The Bellevue War” and picturesquely characterized in a 1920 *Palimpsest* article titled “White Beans for Hanging,” the affair has conventionally been interpreted as the recourse of pioneer settlers to vigilantism in the face of frontier lawlessness. The actual details of the event are more complicated. On April 1, a posse led by territorial legislator Colonel Thomas Cox, and a Whig sheriff, William A. Warren, attempted to serve warrants against W. W. Brown and his associates. Brown operated a hotel and grocery in Bellevue. Cox's group accused him of leading a gang of thieves and counterfeiters. In January, James Mitchell, affiliated with Cox, had murdered James Thompson, an associate of Brown's. As the large group led by Cox sought to serve the warrants on Brown, a gun battle erupted. Cox's faction sustained four fatalities, while Brown and two of his men were killed and six of Brown's affiliates fled. The following morning, Cox's faction led a large crowd that placed Brown's remaining men on trial. In a vote, 42 men voted red beans in favor of flogging and 38 cast white beans for hanging. The vigilantes administered 39 lashes to Brown's associates and dispatched them on a boat headed down the Mississippi River.