

Book Reviews

A History of Iowa, by Leland L. Sage. Ames: Iowa State University Press. 1974. pp. viii, 366, index.

In his book, *A History of Iowa*, published by Iowa State University Press in 1974, Leland Sage has clearly demonstrated his authority in the field of Iowa political history. In this 376 page volume, the former University of Northern Iowa history professor presents—often in considerable depth—the development of Iowa's political framework, the state's relationship to the nation in the area of political behavior and detailed portrayals of the behavior of Iowa's leading public figures, both in state and national affairs. Although the book purportedly is more than a political history, Sage concentrates overwhelmingly on that aspect of the state's history.

Early in the book the author does deviate briefly from political considerations to include a solid background on Iowa's early development. The first chapter is an informative account of Iowa's physical development and geography; written by Herman L. Wilson, former geography professor at the University of Northern Iowa, it marks the only outside contribution to this work. Sage then examines the influence of France and Spain on the Iowa region as well as covering the travels of early European and American explorers. Also included is a brief account of the Black Hawk War. Throughout the remainder of the text, Sage has woven into the narrative brief accounts of the development of the state's educational system and institutions, the activities of early religious groups, and the building of the railroads; with these few exceptions, the book deals almost exclusively with political events and political figures.

In his treatment of such matters, however, Sage continually demonstrates his expertise as a scholar of Iowa history and politics. The section on the Civil War period and the development of the Republican Party in Iowa are major contributions of the book. A second portion that stands out for its completeness and reflects the author's solid grasp of his subject is the Progressive Era where Sage presents full accounts of Iowa's highly visible public figures like William Allison and Albert Cummins. The

treatment of the farm problems during the 1920s, the formation and activities of the Farmers Holiday Association, and the resulting national farm policies of the 1930s is excellent, but for all practical purposes the book ends at that point. Sage has included one chapter dealing with the period from 1938 to 1972 which contains little more than broad generalizations about educational and economic change with the exception of a closer look at the reapportionment struggle of the past decade. Overall, his scholarly work deserves high praise.

The most serious shortcoming of Sage's work is that it is not, in the true sense, a history of Iowa; it is primarily a political history of the state and should be so designated. Given the present title, there is a constant tendency for readers to expect more in terms of social and economic coverage. Any author would face difficult decisions regarding what material to include and what not to include in this type of work. Sage obviously, perhaps in an attempt to keep the book at a reasonable length, favored the political emphasis. Perhaps in the long run, given the limitations of a one volume work, Sage has wisely concentrated on what marks his greatest strength as a scholar of Iowa history as well as what would logically be the first step in developing a multi-volume history of the state.

With the sustained emphasis on political history, however, a certain sameness seems to creep into parts of the narrative. Sage has chosen to set down a complete chronological record (as opposed to selecting out only the more significant events) of state elections, congressional delegations, and governorships and, with the heavy emphasis on election dates and results, the text sometimes becomes almost repetitious and rather dull. The reader searches in vain for more humorous anecdotes or human interest stories to make the material more palatable.

An additional handicap imposed by Sage's approach is that nowhere does he deal with other overriding influences—social, cultural or physical—that shaped the development of the area and influenced the character of the inhabitants. Historically, Iowa's most distinguishing physical feature was the prairie. Certainly the prairie of 1840 is gone forever, but not Iowa's designation as a prairie state. Inhabitants of eastern woodland areas were undoubtedly influenced by their physical environment as were the early settlers on the Plains. In similar fashion, what changes did

the prairie environment demand of its first settlers? Inclusion of this material would have fulfilled an important void as well as providing at least a partial characterization of the people. Nowhere does Sage include an analysis of what it has meant to be an Iowan, taking into account the peoples' spirit, outlook and values, and how that might have differed from being an Ohioan or a South Dakotan or an inhabitant of any other state.

A valuable tool that Sage might have provided his readers is a complete bibliography. A general bibliographic essay would have oriented readers as to the general sources on state history; a list of unpublished theses and dissertations on state history subjects would have further developed the list. In a recently published one-volume state history, *History of North Dakota* by Elwyn B. Robinson (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), the author has provided an excellent guide for his readers. In addition to an essay, a list of unpublished topics, comments on general histories, and a separate list of museums and manuscript collections, Robinson included a chapter by chapter statement on the sources available, a bibliography totaling sixteen pages. While Sage's footnotes are complete and often explanatory (and there is a short commentary on previously published state histories in the Preface), a separate listing of important sources would be useful, particularly since this book will now be considered the standard one-volume work on Iowa history.

#

There are many areas that need attention in book-length form, before the full story of Iowa's social, economic and cultural history has been told. Except for a handful of biographies, little attention has been given to Iowa's leading business entrepreneurs like Frederick Maytag. Business histories should be written about the Maytag Company, the Sheaffer Pen Company and the Collins Radio Company to mention only a few of the deserving groups. Coal mining is a long neglected area of study and while a few short accounts have been written, a full history of that once-thriving industry is sorely needed. It is a project that must be completed soon while the actual former participants—the retired miners and their families—can contribute to it; if not, a valuable facet of the subject will be lost forever.

In the area of minority studies much work remains to be done.

Iowa's Indian populations have not been treated adequately in works that focus on the tribe's residencies in this state. In the area of religious minorities and utopian studies, Iowa again provides fertile ground for the researcher. Iowa's Amana Colonies have not been examined in a scholarly way since the Amana residents dropped their communal arrangement in 1932. As one of the most successful communal societies in the country, they deserve better. Little has been done in Iowa in the increasingly popular area of immigration history. This state with its highly diverse and still visible populations of Italians, Swedes, Norwegians, Danes, Germans, and Croatians, offers immense opportunity for the scholar of immigration history. Family histories offer an excellent avenue for collecting immigrant history as well as general social history. Individuals who possess extensive family materials should be encouraged to turn over copies to groups such as the Special Collections at Iowa State University Library or the State Historical Library in Des Moines. These topics by no means form a complete list of subjects worthy of scholarly attention, but the point has been made: for too long important individuals and institutions in this state have been ignored by scholars.

In the Preface to his book, Leland Sage suggests a three-step plan to properly set down the state's history. He believes that several one-volume histories should be written, followed by a multi-author "Dictionary of Iowa History." The culminating work should then be a five or six multi-volume history of the state. Sage's comments are highly appropriate and merit much attention. As Sage has written in his Preface, "Surely Iowa historiography has come of age; it is time to rise above the mugbook and the children's book. A three-step plan properly executed would give Iowa a storehouse of information worthy of the stamp of History." Considering Sage's book, *A History of Iowa*, one thing is certain: the political history has been written. It is now time to move on to the other neglected areas of Iowa's past.

—Dorothy Schwieder
Iowa State University

"That Disgraceful Affair," the Black Hawk War, by Cecil Eby.
New York: W. W. Norton, 1973. pp. 354, \$9.95.

Cecil Eby, a professor of English at the University of Michigan, presents a narrative history of the "war" between Black Hawk's band of Sauk and a white army of Illinois militia and U.S. Regulars. Eby's style and approach bring to mind the well-worn phrase "muckraker." If Lincoln Steffens had turned his hand to this task, a similar book might have emerged. The writing is lively, there are villains, and, if not heroes, at least there are noble victims. Eby takes pains to flay the morality of the enterprise. If the reader is sympathetic to this approach, then Eby's account is readable, reasonably accurate, and performs the *mea culpa* adequately.

Beneath the frivolity evident in the idiotic behavior of the civilian troops was the basic assumption that Indian killing was an honorable and, perhaps, even necessary task. According to Eby, the Illinois troops were "second generation" frontiersmen who thirsted to prove their manhood by annihilating Black Hawk's people. Moreover, as Eby says, the "overwhelming conclusion is that, having cheated, brutalized, and provoked the Sauk, the whites created a war in the name of preserving peace. They then proceeded to blame their victims for causing it." (p. 95)

An interesting problem emerges from Eby's style and approach, a problem which he shares with other writers on the general topic of white depredations against Indians. Up to the time of the massacre of the Sauk at Bad Axe, the whites—militia and Army alike—appeared to be buffoons. They were incapable of strategy, supply, sobriety, or even the simplest undertaking. In contrast, the "Hawk" was a wily old fighter, capable of eluding or defeating the white hordes despite the burdens of non-combatants and near starvation. The moment the killing began, however, the whites were suddenly transformed into powerful, vicious ogres and the Indians into merely pitiful, helpless victims. While this technique provides drama, it also defies logic.

Moral quandry and literary license notwithstanding, *"That Disgraceful Affair"* updates our view of the Black Hawk War to the 1970s.

—L. Edward Purcell, State Historical Society of Iowa

Chautauqua, by Theodore Morrison. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974.

Chautauqua is an interesting book, largely because the Chautauqua Institution of New York State is a fascinating topic for study. Theodore Morrison, Professor Emeritus of English at Harvard University, has traced the development of Chautauqua from a Sunday-school training camp to a broadly based center for religion, education and the arts. Founded a century ago by Bishop John Heyl Vincent of the Methodist Episcopal Church and Lewis Miller, a wealthy Akron, Ohio farm machinery manufacturer and Methodist layman, Chautauqua became an instant success. By the 1890s the Institution had moved beyond its original function to become a degree-granting university. Although an institution of higher education for only a brief period, Chautauqua pioneered and excelled in the field of adult education ("culture for the masses") with creation of the nationally famous home-reading program, the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle. By 1918 total CLSC enrollment exceeded 300,000. Similarly, the Institution became a mecca for some of the nation's leading scholars, musicians and artists. By the 1930s, however, Chautauqua fell on hard times; receivers ran the operation for three years. Yet a campaign for survival succeeded and today Chautauqua remains an important cultural center.

Professor Morrison wisely included one chapter on the imitators of Chautauqua, the "independent" Chautauquas and the well-known "tent" or travelling Chautauquas. While usually unrelated to the New York institution, the "independents" and the "tents" made "Chautauqua" a household word from the 1890s to the early 1930s.

Largely a narrative work, *Chautauqua* is full of nostalgia. The style is crisp, but the research is shabby. Professor Morrison has relied heavily on several mediocre published accounts. For instance, the coverage of Lewis Miller comes apparently from an awful 1925 biography by Ellwood Hendrick (There are no footnotes). And errors abound: President Hayes is "Haynes" on page 42; 1906 is "1806" on page 149; and the Chautauqua Traction Company, an important event in the Institution's history, opened in 1904 and not 1917! (page 93) Unfortunately, there are addi-

tional errors. At places the narrative itself needs expansion. Morrison, for example, should have said more about the Institution's book press and its journal, *The Chautauquan*. The latter at times served as a voice of social and political progressivism. And the book concludes with an insipid epilogue written by Oscar E. Remick, current president of Chautauqua. If one reads Rebecca Richmond's *Chautauqua, An American Place* (1943) and Joseph E. Gould's *The Chautauqua Movement* (1961) along with this volume, the story of this New York center becomes clear. Nevertheless, the extensive photographic section is marvelous, which makes the \$10.95 list price a fair one.

—H. Roger Grant
The University of Akron

Article Printed in ANNALS OF IOWA Receives Award

The Western History Association awarded \$200 to Robert M. Crunden, an associate professor at the University of Texas in Austin, for his article, "George D. Herron in the 1890s: A New Frame of Reference for the Study of the Progressive Era," which appeared in the Fall 1973 *Annals*. This article was judged by a panel of three—Homer E. Socolofsky, Kansas State University, William H. Lyon, Northern Arizona University, and Irene Simpson Neasham, Sacramento, California—as the best article on the North American West published in 1973. Competition was open to articles about any topic relating to the North American West printed in any regular periodical publication, which were nominated by the editors of the respective journals. Articles were judged by the following standards: 1) significance of the contribution to knowledge; 2) excellence or uniqueness of original material; 3) skill in employing material; and 4) literary quality.

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.