

family histories, it contains dozens of magnificent photographs spanning a century. The implication of Host's work — that schools were central to rural Iowa's settlement and that many such settlements were established in a similar manner — is not new. The book's appeal, rather, stems from its impressive mix of documents, photos, and family histories, all of which make it an enjoyable, non-academic, one-volume introduction to the rural and educational histories of Sac County and, more generally, Iowa.

*Sing Not War: The Lives of Union and Confederate Veterans in Gilded Age America*, by James Marten. Civil War America Series. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011. xii, 339 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95 cloth.

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Nearly three million men served in the U.S. Civil War. This staggering number — nearly 9 percent of the *entire* prewar population — made “Civil War veteran” one of the few common identities available in the rapidly industrializing America of the Gilded Age. In 1875, according to one historian, if two men under the age of 35 met, chances were better than even that one of them was a Civil War veteran; and as late as 1890, Union veterans were still over 2 percent of the U.S. population.

Even though Civil War veterans represented a significant fraction of the Gilded Age's industrial, intellectual, and financial capital, as a group they remain understudied. Through organizations such as the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) and the United Confederate Veterans (UCV), they dominated state and national politics for a generation, including the determination, many historians believe, of at least one presidential race (William Henry Harrison over Grover Cleveland in 1888). In the process, they voted themselves the most lavish pension system the United States had yet seen, such that by 1900, one of every three federal tax dollars was going to a Union veteran or his heirs.

James Marten's *Sing Not War* is an impressive attempt to fill in some of the gaps in our understanding of veterans' postwar lives and identities. Drawing on a rich array of primary sources, Marten identifies several common themes in the lives of the majority of veterans, and he examines the sites where veterans tended to cluster in Gilded Age culture. For instance, the massive state and federal soldiers' home system — the precursor of the Veterans Administration and today's U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs — provided asylum care for indigent veterans in nearly every state and territory in the country. The later

nineteenth century was deeply uneasy with institutionalized charity, however, and so the soldiers' homes became tourist attractions, with families taking advantage of discounted railroad rates to see the old soldiers marching around in their old Union blues or Confederate grays.

Marten is especially good at highlighting this type of cultural ambivalence. Even as veterans — particularly Union veterans — could move huge numbers of votes (and their attendant patronage dollars) by waving the bloody shirt, Gilded Age Americans were well aware that not all old soldiers were saints. Marten's previous historical work focused on alcohol and indigence at the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers (NHDVS), and he brings the fruits of that scholarship to *Sing Not War*. By 1896, for instance, more than 30 saloons clustered near the entrances of the NHDVS's Northwestern Branch in Milwaukee, many of them bearing the names of Sherman, Grant, and other Union heroes and openly employing GAR men (156). As another historian of the NHDVS has noted, the sight of uniformed veterans passed out after spees was common in every city with a soldiers' home. Thus "old soldier" could be as much an epithet as an honorific, and "veteranizing" in army slang was often nearly synonymous with "bumming."

Given the scope of the topic, there are necessarily some lacunae in Marten's treatment of Civil War veterans. The approximately 10 percent of Union forces who were African American, for instance, appear almost nowhere in *Sing Not War*, and Confederate veterans' interactions with freedmen are similarly shorted. Part of this can no doubt be attributed to the acceptance of "Lost Cause" mythology in the Gilded Age. As David Blight details in *Race and Reunion*, the tropes and rituals of reconciliation were created by systematically eliminating African Americans from Civil War memory. Still, as Donald Shaffer shows in *After the Glory*, black ex-soldiers possessed a distinctive veteran culture that often intersected with that of whites, particularly at the officially integrated but de facto segregated national campfires of the GAR.

The quarter of all Union veterans who were foreign-born also get short shrift in *Sing Not War*. This is an especially rich topic for further exploration. Christian Samito's *Becoming American under Fire* traces the efforts of African American and Irish American soldiers to establish their identities as full members of the American body politic through their Civil War service; that effort could perhaps be repeated for other ethnic groups, particularly Germans, who fought in expatriate regiments. Here, too, the nature of the surviving sources takes some of the blame — much of our knowledge of veterans' organized activities comes directly or indirectly from the GAR and (to a lesser extent) the UCV, and those organizations, unfortunately, tended to nativism. Still,

the Union army, at least, really was the “melting pot” of our cultural mythology, and research here would be most welcome.

In all, though, Marten has done a commendable job of outlining the major themes of Civil War veterans’ studies. His scholarship is wide ranging, and his prose is excellent. He has a particularly good eye for the telling detail. For anyone interested in the postwar lives of Civil War soldiers, *Sing Not War* is highly recommended.

*Iowa and the Death Penalty: A Troubled Relationship, 1834–1965*, by Dick Haws. Ames: Dick Haws, 2010. vi, 316 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$25.00 cloth; \$9.99 e-book (from lulu.com).

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Iowa has had a complex relationship with the death penalty. Capital punishment was on the books from early territorial days — and Iowa’s first execution (that of Patrick O’Conner in the Dubuque lead mines in June 1834) actually predated territorial status and formal legal jurisdiction and institutions. Yet the Hawkeye State abolished the death penalty in 1872 only to restore it in 1878 after several well-publicized lynchings. Nearly a century later, in February 1965, at the urging of Governor Harold Hughes, the state legislature (dominated at the time by Democrats) abolished capital punishment.

Iowa’s ambivalence about the death penalty may have stemmed from the mixed origins of its settlers. Many, particularly in the northern portion of the state, were Yankees who tended to oppose the death penalty (Yankees had successfully ended the death penalty in the upper midwestern states of Michigan in 1846 and Wisconsin in 1853); they would be joined in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by Scandinavians who were similarly skeptical of capital punishment. Others, especially in southern counties, had their cultural origins in the lower Midwest or the upper South, where traditions of communally based honor tended to back the death penalty. In total, state and federal authorities executed 45 men in Iowa from territorial days through abolition in 1965. In this well-researched and well-written book, Dick Haws narrates each of those legal executions (plus the 1834 extralegal execution of Patrick O’Conner).

After a short but insightful introduction surveying the history of the death penalty in Iowa, the book is organized in the form of brief chapters describing key aspects of each execution day in Iowa history