

Iowa's Rural School System: A Lost Treasure, by Sandra Kessler Host. Omaha: Sandra Kessler Host and the Odebolt Historical Museum, 2011. 286 pp. Illustrations, maps, appendixes, bibliography. \$30.00 cloth.

Reviewer Shane Butterfield is visiting assistant professor of history at Grand Valley State University. His Ph.D. dissertation (University of Rochester, 2011) was "Reform, Symbolism, and the Demise of the Great Plains Rural School, 1890-1965."

Sandra Kessler Host, a self-professed "daughter of Iowa" (3), attempts to use Richland School #1 in Sac County to demonstrate the intimate relationship between Iowa's settlement and its rural school system. More specifically, Kessler claims that "the settlement of Iowa can be illustrated by the story of pioneer families over three generations and how they settled townships and operated . . . schools" (7) such as the one on which she focuses. Describing these pioneer families, primarily German Americans, gives the book its strong genealogical emphasis, as the school's founding families (and their descendants) receive rich attention. Kessler's own family is among them; indeed, this book's creation is largely a family project with overt personal ties. The heart of the book is the first third, which addresses in a very topical, stratified manner the settlement of rural Iowa as well as the nature of the rural school system. The final two-thirds comprises appendixes of beautifully reproduced primary sources and other borrowed materials.

The book contains a wealth of interesting documents and photographs; its importance to the fields of rural, educational, and Iowa history is limited, however. Much of the book is a compilation of items that appear elsewhere, including newspaper articles and genealogical histories. The first third, meanwhile, while offering plenty of background and detail, contains several notable gaps and little sustained argument. By focusing on genealogy, Host is able to show change over time, but there is little new here of interest to scholars. Perhaps the only recurring line of argument is her periodic assertion that "schools are to Iowa as Spanish Missions are to California," as "both became deeply entrenched in the psyche and heritage of their states and affected each state's settlement and cultural development" (7). Further, some of the appended documents and memorabilia are not well labeled, and Appendix B, about the local Richland Methodist Episcopal Church, seems misplaced in a book ostensibly about rural education's links to settlement. Indeed, readers should bear in mind that, regardless of its title, little more than half of the book is about schools.

Most readers will likely find the final one hundred pages, devoted to the genealogy of the school's "enduring [pioneer] families" (34), to be the book's aesthetic highlight, as, in addition to the innumerable

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.

Reviewer Brian Donovan is a Ph.D. candidate in history at the University of Iowa. His dissertation focuses on disability in midwestern soldiers' homes.

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