

helps us to understand why the decision has been universally proclaimed as a landmark for press freedom, but he also does something equally important. By anchoring the case in its Nebraska context, he reminds us how individual rights, so clear and compelling in their abstract expression, are controversial and often in conflict when experienced in daily life. Ultimately, how we reconcile and balance these rights in theory and practice tells us much about the nature and vitality of our experiment in constitutional liberty.

Little House, Long Shadow: Laura Ingalls Wilder's Impact on American Culture, by Anita Clair Fellman. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2008. xi, 343 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95 cloth.

Reviewer John J. Fry is associate professor of history at Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Illinois. He is the author of *The Farm Press, Reform, and Rural Change, 1895–1920* (2005).

In this book, Anita Clair Fellman presents an encyclopedic analysis of the roles that Laura Ingalls Wilder's Little House books have played in American culture. Fellman argues that since their publication in the 1930s and 1940s, the eight works in the series have affected thousands of American schools and millions of American families. Ultimately, she argues, these works of children's fiction contributed to the rise of political conservatism in the late twentieth century.

The book begins by examining the lives of Wilder and her daughter, Rose Wilder Lane, Wilder's collaborator in writing the books. Several scholars have examined the differences between Wilder's actual life and the stories told in the series. Some have commented on the ways that the authors' opposition to the New Deal and Lane's later commitment to libertarianism might have shaped the books. Fellman takes these observations one step further by pinpointing the exact ways the stories encourage an individualist, antigovernment, and family-oriented vision of the American frontier and American history. These chapters are somewhat dark, emphasizing economic deprivation and family conflict that will surprise lovers of the Little House books, although probably not scholars of the mixed nature of family experiences on the frontier.

Subsequent chapters consider the uses of the Little House books in schools, homes, and public discourse. Fellman provides a nearly exhaustive list of how Wilder and the series intersect with our lives. Entire units in public schools have been based on the books, both in language arts and in social studies. Seven different historic sites in seven different states commemorate events from the family's life. In

addition to the 1970s television series, there are pageants, plays, musicals, tours, pamphlets, and travel volumes. The publisher of the series has released new sequels, prequels, books that fill gaps in the story, and a multitude of merchandise tie-ins to the books. Fellman describes and analyzes these cultural artifacts sympathetically, explaining how those who love the series have interpreted and internalized the stories.

The burden of the book as a whole, however, is to argue that the Little House books contributed to the conservative resurgence of the 1980s and 1990s. Here she is attempting to support with evidence something that some western historians have suspected: that "this series of children's books . . . helped prepare the ground for a shift, in the late twentieth century, in the assumptions about the appropriate role for government. In turn, the entire political culture has been affected" (232). Fellman provides ample evidence for this assertion.

Wilder's life was almost wholly midwestern, so midwestern readers will learn about her life in Wisconsin, Kansas, Minnesota, Iowa, South Dakota, and Missouri. However, Fellman's canvas is national, not regional, so she does not address how the books may appeal in a special way to midwesterners. Those interested only in biographical information about Wilder will be better served by John Miller's *Becoming Laura Ingalls Wilder: The Woman Behind the Legend* (1998). Fellman's work will be of interest to mainly Wilder scholars and other academic historians. Little House enthusiasts will find that Fellman has listened to them well, but she challenges them to reconsider the antigovernment and individualist ideas conveyed by the books.

Ain't My America: The Long, Noble History of Anti-War Conservatism and Middle-American Anti-Imperialism, by Bill Kauffman. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2008. 281 pp. Notes, index. \$25.00 cloth.

In between delivering newspapers and Meals on Wheels, reviewer Bill Douglas ponders Iowa religious and political history from the near north side of Des Moines.

Bill Kauffman's America is one of small towns, isolationism, minding one's own business, and a patriotism based on human-scale values. In another word, Iowa. And although he comes from upstate New York, he has plenty to say about Iowans in this entertaining, enlightening, and (for this democratic socialist) unpersuasive book. Keep a dictionary handy, as Kauffman delights in the obscure word, often colorful synonyms of "rotting." Before delving into the text I counted ten Iowans in the index, but did not recognize three others (more on them later),