

*A South Dakota Country School Experience*, by William E. Lass. Mankato: Minnesota Heritage Publishing, 2014. viii, 79 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes. \$8.00 hardcover.

Reviewer Paul Theobald is dean of the School of Education at Buena Vista University. He is the author of *Call School: Rural Education in the Midwest to 1918* (1995) and *Education Now: How Re-thinking America's Past Can Change Its Future* (2009).

William Lass has produced an autobiographical account of his country school experiences in Union County, South Dakota, a county that borders the state of Iowa north of Sioux City. The reader is introduced to the Lass family and neighbors who sent children to District School #46 in Union County, more commonly referred to as Emmett School. As an accomplished historian, Lass is able to put his country school experiences into the larger context of rural life amid the Great Depression and, subsequently, World War II. In the process, he covers a remarkable range of topics, from area wildlife to fluctuating rural demographics. He is at his best, however, in his meticulous description of students, their teachers, and the school subjects that engaged them both.

This very readable little book demonstrates the significance of local history for more broad-sweeping historical narratives. While there is much here of value to professional historians, there is much, too, for the general public interested in the country school experience. Unresolved debates crop up in this account of schooling in a small South Dakota township. For instance, was the rote nature of recitation pedagogy a sign of how backward rural schools were, as some have insisted, or was it in fact a proven approach to instructing a range of students with widely varied ages, interests, and abilities? Lass touches on issues of this sort while also describing the everyday episodes at school or on the schoolyard that keep the account vivid, sometimes humorous, and always interesting.

*Prairie Forge: The Extraordinary Story of the Nebraska Scrap Metal Drive of World War II*, by James J. Kimble. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014. xv, 217 pp. Illustrations, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$19.95 paperback.

Reviewer Lisa Payne Ossian is a history instructor at Des Moines Area Community College. She is the author of *The Home Fronts of Iowa, 1939-1945* (2009) and *The Forgotten Generation: American Children and World War II* (2011).

About 15 years ago, when I presented my research on Iowa scrap metal drives to an open audience at the Missouri Valley History Conference in Omaha, the panel chair's critique of my paper cited contemporary research suggesting that little of World War II's donated scrap had been

effectively utilized for war munitions. At that point a determined, elegant 90-year-old woman rose to her feet in defense of Nebraska and World War II scrap metal drives, dramatically stating, "I'll have you know that every bit of scrap was used for the war effort."

Author James Kimble begins his book *Prairie Forge* with a similar dramatic flourish and pronouncement that commands the audience to pay attention. Kimble, deeply believing in the cause but crafting a book with a balanced perspective, maintains that sense of urgency throughout his sharply researched book. How did Nebraska take such an unlikely lead in a rather lackluster national iron scrap campaign within the center of a country ill prepared with the resources and labor needed to fight a total global war?

Kimble's work of 158 pages contains a number of valuable elements: 21 black-and-white illustrations of various topics, six chapters framed by "Home Front, Battlefront" as introduction and epilogue (revisited), a ten-page bibliography, a detailed index, 36 pages of research notes, and an appendix on every county in Nebraska with charted summer and combined contributions per capita. The book is factual and energetic. Throughout the text Kimble uses catchy phrases such as the chapter subtitle "how not to win the war" as well as the "persuasive magic" of Henry Doorly. Kimble understands the importance of popular culture, such as the Donald Duck campaign, and he details scrap appeals, blitzes, and strategies while capturing the constantly rhyming rhythm of World War II's advertising efforts for home-front activities.

The book focuses on Henry Doorly of the *Omaha World Herald*. Doorly developed the Nebraska Plan at the prompting of his wife to prove that a good idea with a relentless statewide newspaper and radio campaign could be extraordinarily effective. Kimble states that Doorly crafted iron scrap campaign themes such as "fact and fancy," "competition and camaraderie," "tractors and tricycles." "Too frequently," Kimble writes, "citizens on the home front and soldiers on the battlefield seemed like they were worlds apart. In the wake of the statewide drive and its unforgettable crescendo, however, Doorly and his staff came to believe that there was a possible solution to the home front's malaise" (121). Kimble then explains Nebraska's rapid race to the top. "In this case of scrap collection, the state's newspapers had used an all-out editorial and publicity blitz to entice, cajole, and push readers into the contest, and before long the competitive citizens had become intensely conscious of the need for scrap" (121).

This successful book's author never loses sight of his mission. As he concludes in his epilogue, "The aim of this book has been to contend that, on one level, Doorly's drive was a success in gathering sufficient

amounts of a desperately needed raw material at a critical point. On a second level, Kimble argues that the campaign was successful in altering the experience of the war in such a way that civilians were able to see themselves as home front soldiers" (147). As for that critique of World War II iron scrap drives, I believe my 90-year-old defender would have wholeheartedly agreed with Kimble.

*Gathering the Potawatomi Nation: Revitalization and Identity*, by Christopher Wetzel. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015. xii, 196 pp. Illustrations, maps, graphs, tables, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 hardcover.

Reviewer John P. Bowes is associate professor of history at Eastern Kentucky University. He is the author of *Exiles and Pioneers: Eastern Indians in the Trans-Mississippi West* (2007).

*Nation* is a familiar word, one that at first glance appears easy to define. Yet in the cultural and historical contexts of colonialism, indigenous communities, and the twenty-first century, *nation* as a word, concept, and assertion of political identity takes on greater complexity. In *Gathering the Potawatomi Nation*, Christopher Wetzel addresses those very concerns in a clearly articulated analysis that illustrates how the concept of nationhood currently manifests among the disparate Potawatomi communities in North America. Most important, Wetzel argues that contemporary Potawatomi expressions and conceptions of nationhood reflect, more than anything political or economic, "a decisive shift toward an affirmative collective self-identification" (137). The Potawatomis have found in the concept of nationhood a way to rebuild, maintain, and convey vital social and cultural connections.

The book is divided into two sections, titled "Roots of the Nation" and "Routes to the Nation." This organizational structure illustrates Wetzel's emphasis on how decisions made by contemporary Potawatomi men and women exist within their specific historical experiences and cultural traditions. For the Potawatomis, that historical context finds its most common expression in two events: the Chicago Treaty of 1833 and the Trail of Death that took place later that same decade. Wetzel explains that whereas the treaty symbolized fragmentation and then bore the blame for interband conflict during the Indian Claims Commission hearings of the twentieth century, a more recent emphasis on government forced removals and diaspora has oriented the larger Potawatomi community toward present and future opportunities for reunion.

The path to creating those connections and building the Potawatomi Nation began on the individual level and continues through the efforts of national brokers, men whose "life trajectories, cultural fluency,