

placed in the context of state and national events. Despite some typos and photo reproduction that too often tends toward the blurred and muddy, this is a fine history for anyone interested in midwestern railroading.

*An American Cycling Odyssey, 1887*, by Kevin J. Hayes. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002. xiv, 200 pp. Map, bibliographical essay, index. \$27.95 cloth.

Reviewer James Whiteside is associate professor of history at the University of Colorado at Denver. He is the author of "It Was a Terror to the Horses! Bicycling in Gilded-Age Denver" (*Colorado History*, 1991).

In May 1887 George Nellis, a newspaper writer and avid bicyclist, mounted his high-wheeled Columbia Expert and set out on a cross-country trip from New York to San Francisco. His goal was to cross the continent in record time, which he did. To pay for his adventure, Nellis wrote a stream of articles for his hometown paper and for national bicycling publications, describing the roads, scenery, hazards, and people he encountered. Kevin J. Hayes edited those reports into this entertaining and illuminating account of Nellis's odyssey.

Hayes's major objective, which he achieves well, is to present Nellis's record of his journey as an example of nineteenth-century travel literature. Hayes shows that Nellis tailored his reports for different audiences. For his hometown paper and its rural readers Nellis wrote in the style of the belletristic narrative, emphasizing the grand vistas, thrilling adventures, and characters he encountered. For his other major audience, urban bicycling enthusiasts, Nellis's reports detailed daily distances, times, road conditions, and, where he found them, local cycling clubs. Iowa readers will recognize scenes of Nellis's journey from Davenport to Council Bluffs, including a visit to the Amana settlements, scurrying for protection from a sudden "regular old Iowa tornado" (82), and a tour of Des Moines with members of the local bicycle club.

*An American Cycling Odyssey* succeeds as an example of nineteenth-century travel literature, but as a historical document it raises questions that readers may wish Hayes had contemplated more deeply since bicycling represented ambiguities and tensions in late nineteenth-century American culture. Nellis cherished both his small-town origins and the independence and mobility his bicycle gave him. Yet the bicycle itself, and the smooth macadamized roads Nellis preferred to muddy rural paths, represented a society in transition from rural agrarian to urban industrial. Nellis's visit to Chicago is illustrative.

After two days sampling the sights and sounds of the city, Nellis concluded that "Porkopolis" had no charms for him (71). But without the steel manufacturing and engineering of the industrial city, Nellis would not have had his Columbia Expert and the freedom it afforded him.

Bicycling was, and remains, largely an urban, middle-class recreational activity. Hayes notes that a bicycle like Nellis's cost about one-fourth of a factory worker's annual pay (16), putting the sport out of reach for most working-class people. Underscoring the class basis of cycling, Hayes also notes that "wheelmen belonged to that class of gentlemen-adventurers . . . who enjoyed an evening in their club rooms after a day in the wilds," a social setting far removed from most nineteenth-century Americans' experience (56). In Nevada Nellis encountered a railroad worker who made no effort to conceal his contempt for the wheelman, having "neither sympathy nor tolerance for anyone with enough leisure time to devote to such a seemingly frivolous activity" (143).

Readers may note the absence of women among the cyclists Nellis met during his trip, even though women by then had taken to the wheel, even hazarding to mount high-wheeled "ordinaries" like Nellis's bicycle. Were there no women cyclists in Chicago, Des Moines, Omaha, or the many small towns Nellis passed through, or were they not important enough to him to note?

Such issues are the focus of scholarship in sports history. Although Hayes does not explore them in significant depth, *An American Cycling Odyssey* is useful and entertaining for sports and literary scholars and for cycling enthusiasts.

*Inside the Fighting First: Papers of a Nebraska Private in the Philippine War*, edited by Thomas S. Nielsen. Blair, Nebraska: Lur Publications, 2001. xiv, 187 pp. Illustrations, index. \$19.95 paper.

Reviewer Michael W. Vogt is curator at the Iowa Gold Star Military Museum at Camp Dodge, Iowa. His research interests include American military, frontier, and Gilded Age history.

*Inside the Fighting First* is a chronological compilation of letters and diary entries written by Private Henry O. Thompson of St. Edwards, Nebraska, who served with Companies K and M, First Regiment, Nebraska Volunteer Infantry from August 1898 through August 1899. Each chapter, documenting the observations of a midwestern volunteer soldier, includes a thorough introduction explaining the larger historical context of events in which the First Nebraska participated. Thompson's writings convey the initial enthusiasm and excitement for

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.