

Central Standard: A Time, a Place, a Family, by Patrick Irelan. A Bur Oak Book. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2002. xii, 161 pp. Illustrations, index. \$24.95 cloth.

Reviewer Thomas K. Dean is special assistant to the president of the University of Iowa. He is the author of "The Pedagogy of Place: Valuing Environment and Community in Education," in *JAEPL: Journal of the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning* (1997).

Patrick Irelan's family memoir offers 24 brief personal essays that chronicle the story of his midwestern railroad and farm family. In a spare, modest style, Irelan weaves a compelling narrative that is an elegy for a time past and a way of life lost, but also maintains a gentle optimism about the goodness of people and the solid foundations of family.

The railroad remains the central motif throughout the memoir, and Irelan's parents the central figures. His father, "Pete," held a succession of jobs as telegraph operator and manager of a number of depots throughout Nebraska and Iowa. Struggling to manage a simultaneous life as a cattle farmer, Pete remained an admirable, almost artistic, though somewhat distant, figure to his son. His mother, "Jerry," comes across as especially tenacious.

Irelan's memoir contains no melodramatic moments, but rather shares quiet dramas of a midwestern working family living the best they can across the span of the nineteenth through the twenty-first centuries. Without tumbling into sentimentality, the author relates engaging yet subtle stories of relatives carving out lives of dignity and modest success, and sometimes failure, against the flat and gently rolling landscapes of Nebraska and southern Iowa. "Central Standard" serves as a fitting metaphor for the average yet grounded personalities and experiences so often associated with "the heartland."

A Bountiful Harvest: The Midwestern Farm Photographs of Pete Wettach, 1925-1965, by Leslie A. Loveless. A Bur Oak Book. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2002. xx, 137 pp. Photographs, notes, index, bibliographical essay. \$34.95 cloth.

Reviewer Pamela Riney-Kehrberg is associate professor of history at Iowa State University. Her research interests include rural children, families, and communities.

In *A Bountiful Harvest*, Leslie Loveless has brought to her readers a small but memorable portion of a priceless collection of Iowa photographs. A. M. "Pete" Wettach was a self-taught photographer who worked (although not as a photographer) for the Farm Security Administration in the 1930s and '40s, and continued as a self-described

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