

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

"agricultural photographer" throughout the rest of his life. Over the course of 40 years, Wettach photographed a wide variety of Iowa subjects. Those photographs might have been lost as a historic source if Loveless had not happened upon them and made them known to the State Historical Society of Iowa, where about 50,000 of them are now archived. Had they been lost, it would have been a tragedy.

Loveless has provided an introduction to the photographs, detailing their discovery and Pete Wettach's history. She has also written prefatory material for each of the six sections of photographs: "A Really Nice Paintbrush," including particularly artistic images; "Partner on the Land," highlighting women's work; "Handy Ideas," meaning farm inventions; "Children on the Farm"; "The Tenant Purchase Farms"; and "Relying on Each Other" (people working cooperatively).

The photographs are the core of the book. It is almost impossible to choose favorites among them. A 1938 photograph of a Louisa County farm woman making her own soap is a beautiful illustration of a time and process that were disappearing even as the picture was taken. The Nau children, posed with their four-day-old burro colt, remind us that the possibilities for children's recreation on the farm were far different than those available in cities. A brand new Jefferson County barn, photographed in 1941, was probably obsolete within a short time after its construction, a victim of the demise of horse power in favor of the internal combustion engine. The selection of Tenant Purchase Farm photographs documents the work done in the 1930s by the Farm Security Administration to help farm families renting their land to become landowners. This small selection of Wettach's work speaks eloquently to the enormous changes under way in Iowa agriculture in the middle years of the twentieth century.

As images, Wettach's photographs can certainly stand alone. They are beautiful and evocative. As history, too, they are an invaluable source, documenting how farm families lived and worked. They take viewers to a time and place that have, in the past half-century, largely disappeared. Although many of the photographs are, of course, posed, they nonetheless provide visual evidence of the everyday stuff of agricultural life: farm families' barns, homes, tools, and clothing. Loveless's commentary provides a useful framework for the collection, but interested readers should take their study further and examine Wettach's photographs side by side with historical works, such as Mary Neth's *Preserving the Family Farm: Women, Community, and the Foundations of Agribusiness in the Midwest, 1900-1940* and Katherine Jellison's *Entitled to Power: Farm Women and Technology, 1913-1963*. Other useful adjunct reading would be autobiographical works, such as Curtis

Harnack's *We Have All Gone Away*, Gladys Leffler Gist's *Chasing Rainbows: A Recollection of the Great Plains, 1921-1975*, and Margaret Ott Onerheim's *Threads of Memory: A Memoir of the 1920's. A Bountiful Harvest* is visually rich, and well worth leisurely examination.

Making Minnesota Liberal: Civil Rights and the Transformation of the Democratic Party, by Jennifer A. Delton. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002. xxvi, 226 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$29.95 cloth.

Reviewer Andrew E. Kersten is associate professor of history at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay. He is the author of *Race, Jobs, and the War: The FEPC in the Midwest, 1941-1946* (2000).

At the center of Jennifer Delton's book is an interesting historical question: Why did Hubert Humphrey champion civil rights? Certainly Humphrey's deep humanitarianism drove him to fight for justice. Yet Delton argues that there was much more to it. Backing civil rights fit neatly into the new political culture of the Democratic Party, which emphasized pluralism. Moreover, pushing civil rights as a political issue provided Humphrey and his liberal allies with the opportunity to recast Minnesota's politics and in so doing to reshape the national Democratic Party. In Delton's view, the 1948 presidential election was central to this story. Humphrey helped to lay a civil rights plank into the Democratic Party's platform, thus forcing the Democrats to transform their ideology and commit to political pluralism.

Delton's book enters a somewhat crowded historiographical field. Even before Senator Trent Lott drew recent national attention to the 1948 election, many scholars, such as Alan Brinkley, Robert Caro, Mary Dudziak, Robert Mann, and Timothy Thurber, had investigated the major shift in the Democratic Party to complete developments begun in the era of Franklin D. Roosevelt. What Delton brings to this discussion is a view from Minnesota, which in many ways was the proving ground for the changes that took place later on the national stage. The 1948 election was a culmination of events that began in Minnesota with the rise and fall of the Farmer-Labor Party.

In 1918 the Minnesota Federation of Labor and the Nonpartisan League, a farmers' organization, joined forces to form the basis of what became the Farmer-Labor Party. Rather quickly the party established itself as a major force, electing several governors during the 1930s. Despite the popularity of such politicians as Floyd Olson, the Farmer-Laborites were under constant strain. Simply put, it was difficult to keep the farmers and workers together. This weakness allowed other progressive forces to ascend. By the 1940s, there was a new cadre

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