

scapes. His approach is more sociological than historical, emphasizing the closed nature of small rural communities. His view is biased and at times condescending. Sanger's limited exposure to Cedar County and even Tipton makes generalizations about rural life problematic. Some chapters emphasize the history of the area, but discuss common facts based on readily available secondary sources.

Because the book is "not a work of history and . . . not quite a full-fledged memoir" (195), its contribution to Iowa history is severely limited. As a highly personalized work on contemporary life in a small midwestern town, it provides an interesting perspective; however, its methodology and focus also limit its comparative usefulness.

Raising a Stink: The Struggle over Factory Hog Farms in Nebraska, by Carolyn Johnsen. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003. xii, 181 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$21.95 paper.

Reviewer J. L. Anderson is a Ph.D. candidate in the agricultural history and rural studies program at Iowa State University. His dissertation is a study of agricultural change in Iowa from 1945 to 1970.

Raising a Stink is a study of the controversies surrounding large-scale hog production in Nebraska during the 1990s. Carolyn Johnsen, a Nebraska Public Radio reporter and producer, uses personal interviews, government documents, local and regional newspapers, farm publications, and technical reports to show how economically efficient large-scale hog production provoked responses from people concerned about safety (water quality), quality of life (smell), and economics (property rights, land values, and tourism). Pork producers, state bureaucrats, elected officials, lobbyists, activists, merchants, and neighbors fought at county and state levels. County supervisors struggled to implement zoning regulations to either accommodate or block new operations, while citizens attempted to goad Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality officials to be more aggressive in dealing with factory farms. Meanwhile, legislators attempted to promote economic development while simultaneously protecting public health and ecosystems, fashioning compromises that left all parties wanting more.

The book is more narrative and anecdote than historical analysis, but that does not diminish its usefulness for students of Iowa or the Midwest. It is an ideal textbook for bringing the Midwest into college and university courses in history, political science, environmental or landscape studies, and sociology. Johnsen includes numerous references to developments in other pork-producing states, highlighting

the importance of local variations in soil type, water table, climate, the economy, and politics in shaping the debate. General readers and specialists interested in agriculture and rural life, politics, activism, the Midwest, and the nature of bureaucracy in contemporary America will be enlightened.

Rethinking Home: A Case for Writing Local History, by Joseph A. Amato. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002. xvi, 245 pp. Graphs, maps, notes, index. \$48.00 cloth, \$18.95 paper.

Reviewer Robert P. Sutton is professor of history at Western Illinois University. He is the author of *Les Icarions: The Utopian Dream in Europe and America* (1994), and *Rivers, Railways, and Roads: A History of Henderson County, Illinois* (1988).

In *Rethinking Home*, Joseph Amato, at times, presents a thoroughly researched, lively analysis of local history, "the stepchild of our profession," in his words. A professor of rural and regional studies at Southwest State University (Minnesota), he brings more than twenty years of experience in teaching and writing about the topic to this study of the uniqueness of the region of southwest Minnesota and how it relates to the world at large. He also hopes to present new, provocative ways of understanding local history. He urges investigators of regional development not just to view it historically, but also to incorporate anthropology, linguistics, and geography, among other disciplines. "Local historians," he writes, "must draw on the works of geologists, agronomists, hydrologists, and other students of the natural and constructed world" (12). Despite such contentions, the author sometimes falls right in line with traditional local historians in writing about towns, banks, businesses, churches, and farms.

Amato first discusses and defines the physical layout of southwest Minnesota, aptly including graphs and maps to show its topography, its location, and its rivers and towns. In his treatment of the region's environment, he touches on contemporary conflicts such as those over large hog confinement operations. His chapter on its economy shows convincingly how it has adapted to market demands. He is on firm ground in using fiction as a source for understanding the region and aptly warns that "local historians must indeed embrace literature, but keep one eye peeled" (142).

These strengths notwithstanding, the monograph does have some weaknesses. Amato is inconsistent in his use of the terms *local* and *regional*; sometimes he has them as synonymous and at other times they are different concepts. His lengthy discussions of some topics, such as the pages on the "unsung muskrat," are interesting but not relevant to

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