

*Hans Reimer Claussen, 1804–1895: Eine Lebensskizze/A Sketch of His Life*, edited by La Vern J. Rippley and Joachim Reppmann. Schriften zur Schleswig-holsteinischen Amerikaauswanderung. Davenport: Hesperian Press; Wyk auf Föhr: Verlag für Amerikanistik, 1994. 87 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, chronology.

REVIEWED BY MICHAEL STRÜBIN, AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

The "Forty-eighters"—veterans of the failed revolutions of 1848 in Europe, predominantly from German-speaking regions—left their mark on American history, even though their numbers were not very significant compared to the hundreds of thousands of immigrants from 1847 to 1856. Their ideals of freedom, equality, and participatory democracy fused with American politics in the 1850s when xenophobia, temperance, and the slavery question led to a reorganization of the party system. The German Forty-eighters' liberal views made them model democrats, and German-American tradition and historiography have always looked at them with pride.

Standing in this tradition is this collection of essays in honor of a Forty-eighter who settled in Davenport, Iowa. A trained lawyer with a prominent profile in Schleswig-Holstein's struggle for independence, Claussen was prosecuted and forced to emigrate. In Davenport he tried a variety of professions and eventually opened a law firm. Meanwhile, he became a powerful figure in local politics (most notably in defense of German drinking habits) and was elected to the Iowa Senate in 1869, where he served an influential four-year term.

The essays published in this volume in both German and English bridge the two worlds of Claussen. Readers learn from German and American historians about Claussen's political activities in Germany, his personal circumstances, and his struggles in Iowa. But apart from a discussion of the political background in Europe by Ernst-Erich Marhencke, these essays are preoccupied with Claussen's personal life. Isolated and hagiographic treatments of his political principles and aims reveal little to generally interested readers when accompanied by so little historical context. Yet it is for such readers that this book—primarily narrative in style and without scholarly apparatus—seems to be intended. Readers will also be distracted by occasional flaws in editing and translation. The Forty-eighters, and Claussen, deserve our memory and admiration, but such an uncritical celebration of one individual contributes little to our understanding of them.

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.