

Although most of the material is from the newspapers of the region, some is from the eastern Kansas press. A few items concern developments beyond the Great Plains proper. In one astonishing instance, the *Hutchinson News* quotes Gilbert White's narrative of an encounter between chickens and a sparrow hawk. Many readers will assume that White was a nineteenth-century western Kansas farmer, not the eminent British author of *A Natural History of Selborne* (1789).

We are not told to what extent the author's conclusions apply to lands outside of the Great Plains, such as the tallgrass prairies of the Midwest. Perhaps, however, there has not been enough similar research on other regions to allow him to make comparisons.

In the epilogue Fleharty summarizes the major themes and reports on the present status of several creatures dealt with in the main body of the work. The last paragraph, on the too often unappreciated diversity of Great Plains wildlife, makes an especially worthwhile point.

Home on the Range: A Century on the High Plains, by James R. Dickenson. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1995. 304 pp. Illustrations, index. \$24.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY PAMELA RINEY-KEHRBERG, ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY

James R. Dickenson's *Home on the Range: A Century on the High Plains* is a personal look at the Great Plains and his home town, McDonald, Kansas (population 200 and falling). The text weaves together regional history and tales of McDonald's past, as well as discussions of the present and future of this small town and other places like it. Dickenson's story takes readers from the initial settlement of western Kansas in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries through its depopulation in the second half of the twentieth century. The book chronicles the effects on small towns of such modern innovations as tractors, automobiles, and multilane divided highways, as well as major historical events, such as the Great Depression and World War II.

The book is a collection of stories, interspersed with bits and pieces gleaned from histories of the region. Most historians and well-read laypersons will find the historical material to be fairly standard summations of the findings of scholars such as Walter Prescott Webb. It provides a nice backdrop to Dickenson's stories, but does not tell readers much that they do not already know. What is most interesting is the material not commonly available, such as the settlement's early history as told through the author's grandmother's eyes. The discussion of the trials and tribulations of living in a sod house is priceless, as are the descriptions of harvest, Halloween, and the Christmas

pageants in which the author participated as a child. This material is well worth the time of any student or lover of American small-town life.

The overriding concern here is, of course, the disappearance of places such as McDonald, Kansas. The population is currently less than half of its 1935 high and falling rapidly. Most of the businesses that existed in the town's heyday are long since gone, as are the local schools, swallowed up by consolidation. Dickenson offers no pat solutions to the area's problems. He does note Frank and Deborah Popper's suggestion that the area become a "buffalo commons," and states that it is now a point of discussion throughout the region. He describes the success of Colby, Kansas, in capturing an outlet mall and business off Interstate 70, but notes that this is a solution for only a very few, well-located High Plains communities. He suggests that the hardy few remaining in the area's small towns will fight their own disappearance, but does not tell readers how they will do so.

Home on the Range is a good read, the kind of book to pick up when one is feeling reflective about the nation's past and future and what will become of rural and small-town America. There are no startling revelations here, just a thoughtful and engaging discussion of the value of small places that may soon cease to exist.

Farm House: College Farm to University Museum, by Mary E. Atherly. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1995. xii, 216 pp. Illustrations, maps, plans, appendixes, index. \$19.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY JOHN CHRISTIANSON, LUTHER COLLEGE

Once upon a time, what is now Iowa State University (ISU) was nothing but a brick farmhouse and a few outbuildings on the lone prairies of central Iowa. The house was crammed as full of people as an old-time country tavern: the manager and family, farmhands, boarders; trustees coming for meetings, or whoever needed shelter. Where else could they stay? The house is still there, pretty much as it was, on its original site in the middle of what is now the ISU campus. This lively little book tells the history of that old Farm House.

Six hundred acres of Story County land were purchased in 1859 to establish a state agricultural school and model farm. In 1860 plow teams of six or eight oxen broke the prairie soil, crops were planted, a barn was built, and a brick kiln was put to work on the site. That summer, a small story-and-a-half brick structure was built, and in 1861 a large two-story house was added at right angles, so that the original house became the kitchen wing in back. This Farm House

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