

sights into the composition of the Pioneer Greys and Reserves and their relationship to the Cedar Falls community are possibly neglected here. Yet readers interested in Iowa history will find this a useful introduction to the complexities of civilian and military life in the Civil War era.

Keepers of the Flame: The Role of Fire in American Culture, 1775-1925, by Margaret Hindle Hazen and Robert M. Hazen. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992. x, 281 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY MAUREEN OGLE, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA

Contemporary Americans rarely think of fire as anything more than a potential hazard. As Margaret Hindle Hazen and Robert M. Hazen point out in their encyclopedic but engaging and useful survey of Americans and fire, that has not always been the case; indeed, for much of the nation's history, fire in all of its manifestations served variously as the constant companion, helpmate, friend, and, at times, enemy of people of all ages. Starting with the assertion that prior to 1925 fire was "a powerful leveler" and "a perpetual fact of life" (6), the Hazens survey the multiples uses and forms of fire and heat. They examine, for example, fireplaces, furnaces, and stoves, contemporaries' scientific understanding of fire, the making and "keeping" of fire, fire as special effect, fire as entertainment, firemen and their culture, fire in painting and song, and a multitude of inventions designed to make fire easier and safer to use, inventions that had the effect of "insulating" users from the heat and danger of fire itself.

The strength of this book lies in its informative detail, gleaned from an enormous variety of sources, most of them secondary. In particular, scholars and general readers interested in American domestic life before 1925 will learn much from this book. Especially useful are its discussions of how Americans used fire and fire-related technologies in their everyday lives and its explanations of Americans' changing understanding of fire as a scientific phenomenon. Nineteenth-century firemen and fire fighting are given their due, as is that great urban hero Mose, the Bowery B'hoy. Indeed, there is a wealth of information packed into these pages, all of it presented in clear, engaging prose and illustrated by reproductions of lithographs, trade cards, stereographs, and paintings.

What the book lacks is any substantive analysis, an omission the Hazens justify at the outset by explaining that they deliberately sought

"a broad approach to the subject," any single aspect of which "could be expanded into a dissertation" (ix). The result, however, can be disconcerting if not simply annoying. For example, it is impossible to read this book without wondering what was so "American" about Americans' relationship with fire. After all, Europeans also had to deal with the daily nuisance of tending fires and trimming wicks. How, if at all, did the American relationship with fire differ? How did Americans make fire their own? Similarly, the authors discuss fire-related entertainments and games, many of them designed specifically for children, but a few pages later they discuss the passage of municipal ordinances designed to take fire-related entertainments out of the hands of minors; obviously something happened to make Americans change their attitude toward either fire or children, but no explanation is offered. Discussions of the dangers of fire and the sense of helplessness that people often felt in the face of fire are followed by a section devoted to the growth of the fire insurance industry and fire safety codes, with no attempt to explain how Americans moved from that sense of helplessness to a belief in their ability to control. In short, the Hazens sidestep every opportunity to link this important subject to a broader cultural or social context.

But that kind of deeper analysis was never their intention, so perhaps that failing cannot be held against them. More important, the lack of cultural analysis does not detract from this book's obvious strengths: its clear prose and marvelous array of information. While *Keepers of the Flame* certainly will appeal to the general reader, professional historians interested in domestic, urban, pioneer, or social history in general can learn much from this book.

The Orphan Trains: Placing Out in America, by Marilyn Irvin Holt. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992. 248 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliographical essay, index. \$27.50 cloth.

REVIEWED BY RUTH M. ALEXANDER, COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

In *The Orphan Trains*, Marilyn Irvin Holt tells the story of "placing out," a system devised by Christian charity workers in the nineteenth century to alleviate urban poverty. Between the 1850s and 1920s charity organizations, most notably the New York Children's Aid Society (NYCAS), relocated "at least 200,000 infants, children, and teenagers, as well as thousands of women and hundreds of men and couples" from cities to agricultural communities (156). The emigrants traveled by transcontinental railroad and were taken into the homes

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