

Book Notices

Dark Days of the Rebellion: Life in Southern Military Prisons, by Benjamin F. Booth and Steve Meyer. Garrison, Iowa: Meyer Publishing, 1996. xix, 261 pp. Illustrations, appendix, references. \$24.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY JOHN Y. SIMON, SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY, CARBONDALE

Benjamin F. Booth of the Twenty-second Iowa Volunteers, along with others in his regiment, was captured at the battle of Cedar Creek on October 19, 1864. Booth was taken briefly to Libby Prison in Richmond, then to Salisbury in North Carolina, where he languished until released on parole shortly before the close of the Civil War. A healthy 181 pounds when captured, Booth lost more than half of that weight on prison rations and nearly died on his way back to Iowa. A diary scrupulously maintained during his captivity served as the basis for a narrative he completed during 1865. Booth himself finally published the book in 1897. His bitter hatred of his captors remained but had lost appeal to potential readers. According to family tradition, he eventually stoked his stove with unsold copies of his book. Its consequent rarity led Steve Meyer to republish it, embellished with explanatory sidebars and introductory narrative.

While providing a rare and interesting example of Civil War prison literature, especially valuable as a contemporary diary, Meyer exacts a toll. He has, he writes, "modified the original text to add clarity" (viii), without indicating specifically where he has made such alterations. Since Meyer has become coauthor, readers may confuse Meyer's additions with Booth's text. In resetting the text, a mortar battery that Booth described as "shotted" is now incorrectly "shorted." Some scholars may therefore insist on using the original, recently reproduced on microfiche, but others will welcome Meyer's useful addition to Iowa Civil War bookshelves.

Rain Follows the Plow: Homesteading in Hayes County, Nebraska, the Story of Warren and Ada Clark, by Robert D. Clark. Lincoln: Foundation Books, 1996. xix, 326 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography. \$17.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY PAULA M. NELSON, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-PLATTEVILLE

Robert D. Clark is a lucky man. He located a gold mine of diaries and letters written by his grandparents, Warren and Ada Clark—enough to write a detailed history of their lives and their migration from up-

state New York to western Nebraska in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Clark has used his rare sources well, crafting an interesting narrative of a courtship and a long and reasonably happy marriage, set within a framework of constant economic struggle.

Warren Clark and Ada Harris, natives of Oswego County, New York farms, married in 1877 and began a search for economic security that would occupy their long lives. Warren worked as a farmhand in New York; the couple followed friends to western Iowa, in search of elusive land ownership. After six years as tenants on various farms, the growing family followed their dream to the semiarid plains of western Nebraska, where Warren filed on a homestead and at last owned land. After seventeen years of struggle, the family sold out for three hundred dollars and began sixteen years of itinerancy until Warren's death in 1918. Ada, penniless, lived with a son and his family until her own death in 1939.

The strengths of this book are also its weaknesses. Chock full of details about daily life, work, and social activities, it will fascinate those interested in farm life and westward migration. Some readers, however, may find themselves lost in the "dailyness" of the narrative; at times a more general summary and analysis of events rather than the daily chronicle would quicken the pace. For most, *Rain Follows the Plow* will provide a compelling drama of work, faith and struggle.

The Prairie Schoolhouse, by John Martin Campbell. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996. xvi, 150 pp. Illustrations, map, bibliography. \$60.00 cloth, \$29.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY KATHY PENNINGROTH, A & P HISTORICAL RESOURCES

John Martin Campbell's haunting, starkly beautiful black-and-white photographs of the crumbling remains of prairie schoolhouses are testimony to a bygone age of homestead settlement of the American West. These structures, set amidst the spare and unforgiving landscapes of the shortgrass prairie areas of states from New Mexico to North Dakota and as far west as the eastern regions of Washington and Oregon, affirm the value that struggling homesteaders placed on education.

In his introductory text, Campbell describes the geographical characteristics of the region, the provisions of the 1862 Homestead Act that opened the land for settlement, the ethnic backgrounds of the pioneers who poured into the land beginning about 1885, and the physical attributes of the homesteads, towns, and transportation systems that soon followed. Campbell's description of the schools concentrates on their architecture and settings, but he also touches on their governance by

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.