

a key ingredient in agricultural transition. Nor has he neglected the role of the agricultural press and the changes in farm productivity through greater yields per acre, an expansion in cultivated lands, and the shift toward more livestock, especially dairy cattle.

Parkerson's study is important as a contribution to nineteenth-century American agricultural history and as a fresh, well-documented insight into varied aspects of rural life. Clear and straightforward in expression, the work maintains a good balance between quantification and the literary record. The concept of different types of market ecologies—the dynamic type, viable, and flourishing; the stable, in a state of economic equilibrium; and the marginal, characterized by emerging markets and changing opportunities—is an especially useful analytical tool to differentiate population mobility, market structures, and farming patterns in different geographic areas of the state. Parkerson takes care to place his findings in context with the work of others and to review such controversies as the causes and influence of population mobility, the usefulness of farm children as workers, and the level of market participation that makes one a commercial farmer rather than a semisubsistence yeoman. The study offers important insights into the complexities and dynamics of the transition to commercial agriculture that significantly broaden the current understanding of that process.

Dutch Farmer in the Missouri Valley: The Life and Letters of Ulbe Eringa, 1866–1950, by Brian W. Beltman. Statue of Liberty–Ellis Island Centennial Series. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996. xv, 284 pp. Illustrations, maps, appendix, notes, index. \$27.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY FRANKLIN YODER, UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Ulbe Eringa left his boyhood home in the northern Dutch province of Friesland in 1892, moved to America, and eventually settled in Bon Homme County, South Dakota, where he was a farmer, family patriarch, and church elder. The letters and reminiscences he wrote to relatives in the Netherlands during his fifty-eight years in America offer an intimate look at life in the Midwest during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Eringa's letters are not published simply as reprinted translations. Brian Beltman, a grandson of Ulbe Eringa, analyzes the letters within the debate over immigrant culture, adaptation, and change. Beltman does not make dramatic claims for the importance of his grandfather's letters, but offers the writings as "another piece in the ethnic mosaic that comprises so much of the nation's history" (8).

Eringa was perceptive and articulate, perhaps unusually so. He paid attention to details and readily commented on and critiqued the American society in which he lived and the Dutch society he left behind. His letters reflect a pragmatic view of life and are a reminder that nineteenth-century rural immigrants, like most people, were capable of balancing forces that we sometimes see as contradictory.

Eringa's desire to earn a profit commingled comfortably with his Christian piety and antimaterialism. None of these ideas consumed him, yet all were important. America's wealth and opportunity appealed mightily to Eringa, but he never abandoned Dutch traditions or religious ideals. Eringa was always slightly suspicious of capitalism. He did not cling unquestioningly to his Dutch past. Nor was he a religious fanatic. However, each of these forces did motivate and guide him.

Even the structure of Eringa's letters is evidence of his pragmatism. Within the span of only a few paragraphs, he moves from discussions of livestock prices to church finances to the fate of an old neighbor in Holland. He then admonishes his siblings not to become drunkards, and concludes by offering a commentary on the weather and expressing his satisfaction that he is not renting land in Friesland (108).

Part of Beltman's argument is that adaptation to the new culture and loyalty to the old created a tension that was always dynamic, never static. As Ulbe Eringa lived with this tension, he changed the small part of America that he encountered, and America changed him. His writings bear this out when one compares the person he was in his earliest letters to the person he became. Even as Eringa adapted to America, he remained loyal to religious ideals and a philosophy of life that flowed out of his Dutch past.

In a brief epilogue, Beltman illustrates how elusive ethnicity can be. He argues that on one level the Eringa family appears to have lost most of its "Dutchness" as contact between Friesland and America diminished and almost ended. Early marriages were mostly between Dutch or German immigrants, but as time passed, marriage partners did not share that common past. Divorce, unthinkable to persons such as Ulbe Eringa, has affected later generations of the Eringa family. In spite of these dilutions, some aspects of the past defy change. Ulbe Eringa's farm remains within the family. This same family takes an active role in Eringa's beloved Emmanuel Reformed Church. His letters, and the fact that they still exist, suggest that ethnicity has a surprising staying power.

Material as singular and personal as that found in this book can be problematic for historians trying to understand immigrant cultural

change. For example, was Ulbe Eringa typical of other Dutch immigrants? If not, how do we interpret Eringa's observations? Did his biases undermine the integrity of his conclusions? These are questions each reader will need to answer. In my opinion, however, Ulbe Eringa's letters speak clearly and forcefully, and they present a personal portrait that reminds us that history is individual stories as much as it is social movements and systemic change. His story reveals how immigrant culture helped create, and continues to influence, the rural Midwest.

Ulbe Eringa's letters support recent arguments that immigrants negotiated a place in American culture. They accepted parts of their new surroundings, retained parts of their past, and created something unique and new in the process. Not only are the letters evidence that this happened, but they offer what historical evidence so often lacks—personal reflections on an immigrant's life in America. Eringa's sense of order, his devotion to church, family, and farm, and the frustrations, joys, and sorrows that he and his family experienced all find their place within this very readable, personable, and important book.

The Black Press in the Middle West, 1865–1985, edited by Henry Lewis Suggs. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996. vi, 410 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. \$69.50 cloth.

REVIEWED BY HAL S. CHASE, DES MOINES AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND SIMPSON COLLEGE

The Black Press in the Middle West, 1865–1985 is a sequel to *The Black Press in the South 1865–1985* (1983). Each volume consists of detailed, in-depth, individually authored, state-by-state histories of African-American newspapers, and each includes footnotes and a generous bibliography. Hence, they will be the standard sources for the black press for decades.

The Black Press in the Middle West, 1865–1985 contains chapters on Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Iowa. Because of their similarity and the readership of this journal, this review will focus on the Iowa chapter.

During Reconstruction, black papers were short-lived. Beginning in the 1880s, however, extraordinary men founded or gained control of papers that lived as long as they did. *The Iowa State Bystander* represented this national and regional trend of personal journalism from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. Established in 1894, it changed hands several times before 1922, when it came to rest in

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