

## THE ANNALS OF IOWA

peculiarities, profundities, and conventionalities of Prairie City's denizens.

Historians studying the role of formal institutions in small towns will read with interest of the town's mayoral election and Bauer's report of a city council session. The city's newspaper takes a special place: It does not disseminate news; rather, it serves to legitimize the stream of gossip which flows from the bars and other eateries such as the Please-U-Cafe and the Cardinal Inn.

The real stuff of the book is people, their ways, their sometimes parochial attitudes, their work, their play, their outward pessimism, and their fundamental optimism. One of the most telling points Bauer makes concerns their optimism. One suspects he has changed his initial attitude toward his neighbors by the book's end. Bauer sketches a fair share of pessimistic, cynical town characters. At the end of *Prairie City* he discovers an historically enduring optimism in its people, marked by mere facades of negativity:

As much as farmers show their suspicion of the skies, and speak of weather, government and the world's markets as living adversaries, they also assume each year a virginal faith. They place. . . seeds into the ground, thinly cover them, and go away, leaving them unattended and exposed. A trust—more essential than rich land. . . is required for farming; an almost organic trust that cities have long lost or perhaps never had.

IOWA STATE HISTORICAL DEPARTMENT

JACK LUFKIN

*Wichita: The Early Years, 1865-1880*, by H. Craig Miner. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982. pp. xi, 201. Photographs, notes, index. \$17.50.

H. Craig Miner has undertaken the challenging responsibility of writing an analytical "urban biography" of Wichita, Kansas. An important Great Plains regional metropolis, Wichita grew from an uninviting trading post into an agribusiness, airplane production, and energy center. Miner, a professional historian at Wichita State University, is the author of three previous books and many articles on the American West. His *Wichita: The Early Years, 1865-1880* is the first of two volumes. He sees the early years as a distinct whole: "frontier Wichita was not a romantic anomaly related to the modern metropolis only in the sharing of a name; the commercial foundations of the present city were established during the first fifteen years, as were the local attitudes that served it through the time of airplanes and oil derricks" (p. xi). His account of frontier Wichita deals with the role of the

## Book Reviews

federal government, the policies of the business community, and the extent of frontier violence.

Miner, the coauthor of *The End of Indian Kansas: A Study of Cultural Revolution, 1854-1871* (1978), breaks new ground by emphasizing how changes in federal Indian policy affected the formation of Wichita. A transfer of land from the Indians to the federal government did not occur until 1865, over a decade after the establishment of Kansas Territory. Commenting on the implementation of a move toward a reservation policy, Miner writes, "Had the federal government not decided at that time to pursue a policy of 'concentration,' which provided both for the removal of the Indians living on reserves in Kansas and for a lucrative private business of providing for Indians who had been cut off from their traditional hunting grounds, Wichita could not have existed" (p. 170). With some reason, he takes historians of the urban American West to task for slighting the impact of the United States government on city building.

Of great historiological import is Miner's disagreement with Robert Dykstra's *The Cattle Towns* (1968). This work by a former professor of history at the University of Iowa is a basic study of the cowtown environment. It plays up an urban-rural split in Wichita and plays down popular notions of the ruthless nature of the frontier experience. Following comprehensive research, Miner reaches opposite conclusions. In regard to entrepreneurial activities, he shows how agricultural and city interests transcended differences to promote the fortunes of Wichita. The same was true of parochial concerns within the community: Opposing politicians united to support the city. In regard to law and order, Miner concludes that Wichita had serious problems. "Certainly Wichita did not have the large number of violent deaths that movie and television westerns seem to suggest," Miner contends. "But it should be stressed also that in rowdyism, gambling, and vice, real Wichita was competition for any fictionalized account, and popular writers have erred only in missing some of the authentic color because of inadequate research" (p. 109). He argues that neighboring Delano and West Wichita should be included in the Wichita crime statistics. He contends that street crimes, related to prostitution and heavy drinking, occurred all too frequently. Miner's conclusions point toward a need for a re-examination of the frontier experience in Kansas cowtowns.

Miner's book is based on a comprehensive survey of secondary and primary materials. Of special note is his utilization of holdings in the National Archives Building in Washington, D.C., ranging from registers of frontier traders to various reports relating to Kansas In-

## Book Reviews

dians. These and other sources add substance to a work that contributes much to the understanding to America's frontier experience and urban history.

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*Elliott Coues: Naturalist and Frontier Historian*, by Paul Russell Cutright and Michael J. Brodhead. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981. pp. xv, 509. Maps, illustrations, appendixes, notes, bibliography, index. \$28.50.

When Elliott Coues died on Christmas Day, 1899, probably few people could say that they truly admired or understood the man, yet none could deny that he was intelligent and talented—and productive. Although trained as a physician, Coues' abiding interest had been ornithology, a realm in which he distinguished himself. But he was more than a leading expert on birds. He also made his mark as a mammalogist and as an historian, and, in establishing his scientific and literary reputation, he produced an almost overwhelming number of publications, ranging, for example, from his highly regarded *Key to North American Birds* to *Fur-Bearing Animals* to his well-known edited work *History of the Expedition under the Command of Lewis and Clark*. And his accomplishments were duly recognized. He was elected to membership in over thirty learned societies, including the American Philosophical Society, the National Academy of Sciences (At age thirty-four, he became the Academy's youngest member.), and the American Ornithologists' Union, which he helped to found.

Unlike many of his peers, however, Coues was far from being a reclusive intellectual. On the contrary, his life was filled with diverse activities such as serving for several years as an army surgeon on the frontier, working at the Smithsonian Institution, teaching anatomy at the National Medical College, and even forming the Gnostic Theosophical Society of Washington. In all, he was an active, often contentious, sometimes strange, and generally intriguing man. Now, thanks to Paul Russell Cutright and Michael J. Brodhead, a full scale biography of Coues is available.

Cutright and Brodhead no doubt faced a tremendous task when they began this study. Indeed, they might well have chosen to construct only an intellectual portrait of Coues. Fortunately, they shouldered a harder burden: They strove to produce a picture of Coues the man as well as Coues the scholar. At the same time, they did not eschew presenting protracted appraisals of Coues' scientific

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