

Broehl should have identified "Iowa College" as the future Grinnell College (104). The author uses "affected" where "effected" seems better (346), and "endorsement" when he means "endowment" (347). He misuses "fortuitous," (xiv, 315), and he misplaces information about the Hart-Parr Company in the footnotes (Ch. 7, fns. 13, 14). Incidentally, how many general readers would know who Hart and Parr were without identification? Iowa Governor Harding's initials were "W.L." not "W.N." (433-434), "suppression" needs another "p" (444), it is doubtful that Deere's Minneapolis Branch "had its expenses balloon" (457), and "waiver" has a surplus "i" (607). The book's great strengths, however, more than offset its weaknesses. One such strength is the way that the author briefly sketches the national and international historical background as he moves along through the story. He always keeps the reader aware of the contemporary scene.

There is one area where the author might have given us more, not less. In a book which places such high value on the contributions that minor and major executives, heads of departments, branch managers, and so on have made to the company's well being, the author is all too often content to mention the name and then proceed to describe the individual's work or policy. Some sort of background identification, be it ever so brief, perhaps in a footnote, perhaps in the text, would have improved the book. Examples are Burton F. Peek, George N. Peek, F. H. Silloway, Leon Clausen, Benjamin Keator, Ralph Lourie, and George Crampton. A good example on the positive side is Broehl's treatment of George Mixter. These sketches would have added a few pages to the length of the book, but they would have been well worth the extra expense. All in all this splendid book should generate much pride among the sponsors and give immense satisfaction to the author.

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

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*Main Street Iowa, 1920-1950*, edited by Carl H. Larson. Humboldt, Iowa: Educational and Creative Graphics, 1983. 179 pp. Notes, illustrations, bibliography. \$9.95 paper.

Newspapers have played a rich and varied role in American society, both reflecting and shaping its evolution. From the revolutionary declarations of Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Paine, to the jingoistic "yellow journalism" of William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer, to the careful yet shocking reports of Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, newspapers have described and influenced the coun-

try's political life. Also, as they grew—from two- or four-page weeklies, with pages of densely intermingled news and commercial announcements, to bulky dailies packed with long feature stories, elaborate display advertising, many photographs, and banner headlines—newspapers paralleled our mass society's modernization and impersonalization, not to mention its developing consumer tastes. Americans have discussed the rights and responsibilities of a free press under the first amendment repeatedly, most recently in court proceedings which involved such disparate characters as Jerry Falwell, Larry Flynt, and William Westmoreland. The intensity of the debate over journalistic practice is one measure of the importance which American society accords its press.

Even though other media have emerged to serve mass society's communication needs, Americans continue to use newspapers. Newspapers provide such important links to the national and even the international scene, that it is easy to forget how deeply rooted they are in particular places. As localized creations aimed at nearby audiences, most newspapers offer distinct perspectives on both their immediate communities and on the larger world. This attachment to a specific place, as well as their rich fund of information on all aspects of society and culture, renders newspapers useful to anyone interested in the American past.

In *Main Street Iowa, 1920-1950*, Carl H. Larson argues that small-town newspapers can demonstrate how a particular era appeared to a specific community. Larson is a native of Sioux City who has worked in Melvin, Moneta, LeMars, and Storm Lake and who now serves as assistant superintendent of Iowa Central Community College in Fort Dodge. After offering a brief general description of each decade covered, drawn from standard, traditional accounts, Larson presents editorials from two or three papers to show the local perspective on the same decade. The *Jefferson Bee* and *Forest City Summit* are his sources for the 1920s. The *Richland Clarion*, *LeMars Globe Post*, and *Storm Lake Pilot Tribune* serve the same purpose for the Depression years. The *Adair County Free Press*, *Villisca Review*, and *North English Record* represent the war years and after. Although Larson does not explain his principles of selection and totally ignores the northeast quadrant of the state, he declares that these eight newspapers are "representative examples" of Iowa journalism during the era. This claim fails to convince, but his selections do provide insight into the viewpoints of particular communities.

Larson clearly admires each of the editors whose work he has chosen, and the dozen or so selections from each provide ample displays of wit, effective writing, and general thoughtfulness. Once

again, Larson does not explain his basis for picking these examples from among the hundreds of editorials which each author prepared. Although Larson does not systematically examine his editors' backgrounds or outlooks, he does provide some beguiling clues. Brief biographical sketches reveal that few had any higher education and several did not finish high school. They "frequently would write about issues that they maybe didn't thoroughly understand . . . yet, as editor, their task was making knowledge available for their readers. They felt, it seems, that they were given this type of license" (17). Their political preferences go unexamined, yet the childhood experience of one is suggestive: "His father got down on his knees while milking the cows in the barn and prayed to almighty, merciful God to forgive the little boy who knew no better than to march in a Democratic party parade" (37). Occasionally, the editors' view of their own role emerges, as in one's rejection of photographs showing grief or wartime horrors as being "in exceedingly bad taste," (98) or in the declaration that "The country newspaper that wants to prosper must work for the good of the community in which it is published" (122).

One should read *Main Street Iowa* less for the unproven assertion that it represents the collective experience and viewpoint of rural Iowa over three decades, than for the inherent interest of the material presented. Debates over whether to allow Sunday baseball, reactions to national prohibition, comments on the impact of radio, and a marvelous report on a "Crazy Man in Town" give insights into life in the 1920s. Comments on the New Deal and World War II are equally worthwhile. Even when editorial judgment was dreadful, as in a piece which praised Hitler's sterilization policy, the reader's interest in the thoughts of the journalists never flags. Carl Larson has provided just enough material from each of his eight newspapers to demonstrate what a rich resource for local history exists in their pages. If *Main Street Iowa* encourages readers to dig further into the back files of their local newspapers, as it certainly should, it will have achieved a truly worthwhile purpose.

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