

Book Reviews

of history that these urban views can yield to the imaginative historian. With this book as a guide, many will surely follow his suggestion. It is a unique reference tool, an informative overview of a long ignored popular art form, and a feast for the eyes of any who enjoy gazing at yesterday's towns and cities from imaginary viewpoints in the historical air.

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

DON H. DOYLE

We Belong to the Land: Memories of a Midwesterner, by Beulah Meier Pelton. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1984. 211 pp. Illustrations. \$16.95 cloth.

Life is a journey no matter how far or near we travel from home, and the course of our travel necessarily becomes complicated as we continually search for that place called "home." We of the Midwest, in particular, long for a homeplace as we move over the land, and the farm continues to be our symbol of home. Today as we drive the roads out of town the old farm buildings (many now vacant, with corn rows pressing against the decaying foundations) remind us of a mythological past when all settlers were at home. Although the myth of the homeplace is a real one—grounded in a deep longing of the heart—our Midwest ancestors were also travelers. More often than not, the homeplace was a dream which movement constantly disrupted.

Beulah Meier Pelton has traveled this road. Her grandparents came to Iowa, along the bottomlands of the Missouri River, in the middle of the last century. She spent her childhood on the farm her father and mother bought from her grandfather, located in northeastern Iowa. The family experienced a few years of prosperity during and after World War I, but with the severe depression that hit farmers in 1922, and with too many debts, the family lost the farm. After meeting with the banker, her father walked wearily into the house, his shoulders bent, tears streaming down his face, and said, "Well, it's all over now. It's all gone—the farm, the livestock, everything." For the family, if the land was gone, as the daughter tells us, "We had no home."

We Belong to the Land is the account of three generations of Iowa farmers, as the daughter/granddaughter, Beulah, born in 1914 and removed at an early age from the homeplace, tells it. She "had a damnable childhood from the very first day we left the farm." Her father found work in the small town of Westgate. With a succession of other jobs, the family moved from one place to another in

Harrison County. A move was imminent whenever Beulah's mother began to wrap the furniture legs. "Because of moving," Beulah "had no sense of belonging anywhere." None of these moves were sentimental journeys.

When Beulah grew up, married William Pelton, and William's brother unexpectedly died, William and Beulah moved onto the brother's rented farm. The adult portion of Beulah's story is a vivid, realistic description of farm life during the 1930s, the 1940s, and part of the 1950s. William and Beulah, with their three sons, eventually bought a farm of their own. Farming was not easy for Beulah Pelton. She does not tinge her descriptions of daily life—cooking, milking, raising chickens, haying, cleaning, trips to the outhouse, and so forth—with nostalgia for a lost world. Even after so many years she writes with a caustic tone. We still hear the complaints she must have lodged years ago on the farm.

The barn had been built with an eye to the convenience of the man who worked in it and the comfort of the creatures who inhabited it, but the house had been built with one purpose in mind—to put a roof over one's head. No fuss, no feathers. Just a roof over one's head.

Poets speak glowingly of the old-fashioned winters, of the blazing log, the soft romantic gleaming of lamplight, the contentment of a family gathered around the welcoming hearth. But I always figured those poets hadn't ever tried an old-fashioned winter, and if they had they might not have liked it.

William told me not to worry about not being able to raise a big garden. 'When Jimmy is old enough to go to school you can help me with the farm work,' he said. This was a very comforting thought. Now I had something to look forward to.

In addition to such irony and to rich detail, a modern feminist consciousness pervades the memoir. Today's awareness informs the author's account of the past. Surely, "it never occurred to any of us farm women to go out in the world and 'do our own thing.' Besides, we were already doing our own thing, which usually consisted of what was expected of us. . . . The rationale was simple in those days. A girl would get married some day—right? Therefore, it was necessary for her to learn 'womanly' arts of housekeeping and cooking." Beulah Pelton seems to have been conscious of women's issues—in her own terms—years ago while on the farm. The author of today is an extension of a life lived with a vision beyond the conventions of a prescribed rural existence. Her writing of this memoir reflects that vision.

Book Reviews

The author also writes with great sympathy; she cares deeply about her family and the hardships they faced. They battled both the natural elements and the injustices of the free enterprise system. They sacrificed; suffering was evident at every turn. Near the end of her book, still recalling the loss of her father's farm when she was very young, Beulah tells us: "We never really put down roots anywhere after that. We never really felt like we had a home anywhere we ever lived." Beulah Pelton's truthfulness is a gift to all who read it. This is, indeed, a contemporary tale of the frustrations we all know in our search for a home in this world. For farmers today, especially, it has an all-too-familiar ring.

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

RICHARD QUINNEY

This is Home Now, by Floyd A. Robinson. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1983. xiii, 229 pp. \$14.95 cloth.

Today fewer than 3 percent of the population live on farms. Consequently, most people know little about farming. Some may be familiar with the general outline of daily farm activities, such as milking, plowing, or threshing, but few know precisely how farmers went about these tasks in the past and few understand the drudgery as well as the pleasure of farm life. Moreover, agriculture has changed so rapidly, particularly during the twentieth century, that even contemporary farmers may be ignorant of their grandparents' agricultural experiences. While most farmers, for example, can operate the largest four-wheel-drive tractors, few have experience in harnessing teams of horses for plowing. Similarly, agricultural historians busily explain shifts in agricultural policy, the effects of technological change, or past economic problems while seldom describing the most basic feature of agriculture—the actual farming process.

Floyd A. Robinson, a retired public school teacher who grew up on an Iowa farm, has written an excellent account of a farmer's daily concerns during the second and third decades in twentieth-century Iowa. *This is Home Now* may tell us more about farm life in the Midwest than most of us have ever known. Robinson traces the fictional Harper family from coal mines of Indiana to northwestern Iowa during the winter of 1913. Although Robinson has not intended this book to be a memoir, one suspects that it is largely autobiographical. It is a personal story of a tenant farmer's struggle to raise a family and make his land productive, a story of unremitting toil, of missed school days, of danger, and of remarkable change.

Robinson organizes his account of farm life around the seasons.

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