

## Book Reviews

immigrants. To the standard explanations of why Danes had such a high propensity for assimilation—lack of pride in their national heritage, the relative lateness of Danish emigration, a willingness to abandon cultural habits which hampered economic advancement, and the belief that Danish physical characteristics and values coincided with those of a majority of the American population—Nielsen adds another element: "Instead of providing a rallying point for Danish Americans, the church failed to attract most Danes and became instead a divisive element for the Danes who remained Lutheran and for those who became Baptist, Methodists, and Adventists" (p. 90). Nielsen's thought-provoking analysis of the factionalism among Danish-American religious leaders is one of the major contributions of his study and deserves the attention of a wide range of scholars.

Overall, there are few heroes or villains in this work. For the most part, it is the story of ordinary people who once were Danes and eventually became Americans. With the relative paucity of works on Danish American history, this book is a must for the general reader and specialists alike. Most libraries will want to add it to their holdings.

WEST TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY

PETER L. PETERSEN

*The Gate City: A History of Omaha*, by Lawrence H. Larsen and Barbara J. Cottrell. Western Urban History Series, vol. 4. Boulder: Pruett Publishing Company, 1982. pp. xiii, 325. Photographs, suggestions for further reading, index. \$19.95.

*The Gate City* could have been subtitled a "biography" of Omaha, since what the authors have attempted is really the life story of a city, from uncertain infancy to troubled maturity. The result is a skillful portrait of a city with a colorful and important past.

The portrait comes blemishes and all. As the authors are quick to point out, they have neither lived in Omaha nor received any monetary support from anyone in Omaha for the writing of this book. While their view of the city's history is generally positive, this is not an uncritical saga of unfaltering growth and progress. It is instead a book about a city that has survived a succession of economic, political, and moral crises and has been tempered in the process. The city that Carl Sandburg described as a "roughneck" has a strong instinct for survival against long odds, and the element of uncertainty and risk in Omaha's development is given appropriate emphasis.

There was no guarantee of success when Omaha was founded in 1854. Such nearby communities as Bellevue, Nebraska City, and Brownville seemed at least as favorably endowed. Through skillful

political maneuvering and more than a little luck, Omaha quickly emerged as the commercial center of Nebraska and much of the Great Plains, a position it continues to maintain.

The decisions of outsiders had much to do with this. The building of the Union Pacific Railroad, the establishment of the meat packing industry, and the placement of Strategic Air Command headquarters were crucial decisions that were largely made elsewhere. This dependence on outside leadership and capital was partially offset by local influences and policies. This uneasy balance made Omaha a vital center for transportation, defense, and finance, but it also tied Omaha to aging industries and the whims of decision makers in Washington or New York. Only later expansions into telecommunications, insurance, and agri-business spared Omaha the fate of other midwestern company towns allied so closely to meat packing and railroads.

*The Gate City* highlights the differences between modern, professionally written urban history and earlier treatments that concentrated on boosterism. Relatively little space is devoted here to prominent individuals and singular events, whereas a great deal of attention is given to Omaha's recurring conflicts over labor, race, and municipal expansion. The place of Omaha within state, regional, and national issues is also emphasized, so that we see Omaha's successes and failures as part of a larger pattern. The authors' discussion of Omaha's racial and ethnic heritage is a particularly good example of this more balanced approach.

Although the book succeeds as well as any general history can in telling the story of an entire city, it does have some shortcomings. The authors seem to be in their element when writing about the period prior to 1930. These chapters are handled much more confidently than those that deal with the succeeding decades. There is a tentativeness to these later chapters and a greater degree of generalization than in the earlier sections.

Greater analysis of the Missouri River's impact on Omaha might also have been appropriate. The river is seen here more as a border for the city than as an avenue of commerce between St. Louis and the northern plains. The recent *Bertrand* excavations at nearby DeSoto Bend have shown how important this traffic was during parts of the nineteenth century. This aspect of Omaha's history is largely overlooked by the authors.

A less serious criticism concerns the illustrations in *The Gate City*. Many of the archival photographs are either unrelated to the text or too small to be useful to the reader. The most recent photographs are uniformly poor in terms of quality and content. Greater care should have been taken in the selection and reproduction of all

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the illustrations in the book. A modern map of the city would also have been helpful.

Despite this, *The Gate City* is an important contribution to the study of Omaha in particular and the midwestern city in general. The authors have produced a work that is largely free of partisanship yet full of a sense of Omaha's distinctive character. They have succeeded in producing a biography of the city without succumbing to the uncritical attitudes that biographies sometimes instill in authors.

*The Gate City* is also a welcome addition to the growing literature in the field of American urban history. As such it is a worthy successor to earlier Western Urban History Series volumes on Denver, St. Louis, and Kansas City. It is hoped that additional studies in this series will be forthcoming, and that they will be equally well done.

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

KEVIN BOATRIGT

*Forging the Copper Collar: Arizona's Labor-Management War of 1901-1921*, by James W. Byrkit. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1982. pp. xiv, 435. Photographs, maps, notes, bibliographic essay, index. \$24.95.

The latest work in a series of studies of the American West which examine the region's frontier mining era is James Byrkit's *Forging the Copper Collar*. Along with Richard Lingenfelter's *The Hard-Rock Miners* (Berkeley, 1974), Ronald C. Brown's *Hard Rock Miners* (College Station, 1979), and Mark Wyman's *Hard Rock Epic* (Berkeley, 1979), Byrkit's study contributes to our understanding of the day-to-day existence of western miners and the force of technological and managerial change on their work and lives. *Forging the Copper Collar*, while more narrowly focused on industrial relations in Arizona's copper industry, tackles the political history of the state in the era as well. The deportation by vigilantes of 1200 striking miners in Bisbee, Arizona in 1917 forms the centerpiece of the work and the culmination of the campaign by copper corporations to secure control of the state.

Between 1901 and 1916 a wave of reform legislation transfigured Arizona politics. A distant outpost of the Progressive movement, the territorial legislature and the 1910 Arizona Constitution Convention favored the recall of judges plus initiative and referendum; passed the eight-hour day for state and local employees, child labor laws, workmen's compensation; and nearly enacted an anti-injunction law. Under the stewardship of Arizona's first elected governor, Democrat George W. P. Hunt, the liberal, reform, and anti-corporate wave crested. Hunt and liberal labor interests tried to tax the copper com-

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