

THE ANNALS OF IOWA

problem itself rendered complete success unattainable whether by a policy of price manipulation, or conservation, or the application of the ever-normal granary concept. Yet, the achievements of the New Deal were remarkable. It enabled many farmers to avoid the abyss of economic calamity, and what is more important, it set the pace for all future policymaking.

MIDWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY

KENNETH E. HENDRICKSON, JR.

The Danish Americans, by George R. Nielsen. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981. pp. 237. Notes and references, selected bibliography, index. \$14.95.

Through the years, Iowa has played a major role in the history of Danish Americans. Approximately one out of every ten Danes who emigrated to the United States came to the Hawkeye State, and the nation's largest rural Danish settlement is centered in Shelby and Audubon counties. Here, at Elk Horn in 1878, the immigrants established the first Danish Folk School in America. Grand View College in Des Moines is also of Danish origin and from 1896 to 1959 it served as the seminary for one of the two Danish Lutheran church bodies. Given the close ties between Danish immigrants and Iowa, many readers will welcome the publication of this first single-volume account in English of the Danish presence in America.

The Danish Americans is part of Twayne's "Immigrant Heritage of America Series" which aims to provide separate overviews of the many groups comprising the nation's rich ethnic mosaic. Accordingly, George R. Nielsen, who earned a Ph.D. at the University of Iowa, identifies and interprets the main aspects of Danish American history while conveniently summarizing the relevant work of other scholars. After a brief review of Danish history, he describes the factors which led to the migration of one-third of a million Danes to the United States. Some emigrants, such as the Mormons and Baptists, were motivated by religion while others, most notably the socialists, sought political freedom. The overriding impetus behind the migration, however, was economic; the author presents a neatly-done abridgement of the literature on this topic, particularly the recent work of Danish historian Kristian Hvidt.

In subsequent chapters, he recounts the history of Danish settlements in various sections of the United States, details the development of Danish-American institutions such as the Folk Schools, and describes the unsuccessful efforts of Socialists Louis Pio and Poul Geleff to create a colony in Kansas. Undergirding the entire book is the thesis that Danes were among the most rapidly assimilated of all

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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

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