

# The Annals of Iowa

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## In This Issue

SHARI RABIN, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Religious Studies at Yale University, uses correspondence from Jews in early Iowa to show how Iowa Jews used the Jewish press to create and disseminate authority, information, and community, in the process shaping local Jewish life and creating a national American Jewry.

PATRICIA N. DAWSON, librarian/curator at the Hubbell Museum and Library in Des Moines, provides biographical information on three generations of the Cowles family, one of the most influential families in Iowa history, and describes the collection of materials about the family held by Cowles Library at Drake University.

## Front Cover

John Cowles (center) enjoys the moment as Wendell Willkie greets an unidentified man, ca. 1940. For more on the Cowles family and the collection of materials on them held by the Cowles Library at Drake University, see Patricia N. Dawson's article in this issue. Photo from the Archives at Cowles Library, Drake University.

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# The Annals of Iowa

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# “A Nest to the Wandering Bird”: Iowa and the Creation of American Judaism, 1855–1877

SHARI RABIN

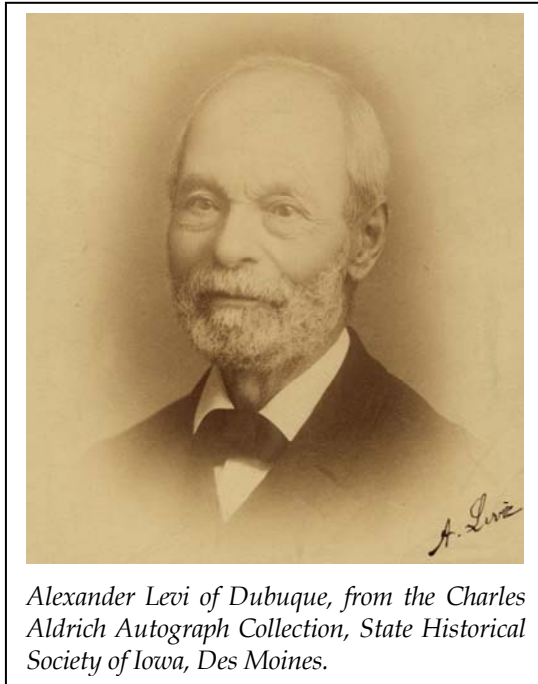
THE FIRST JEW, and also the first naturalized foreigner, in the state of Iowa was Alexander Levi, a Frenchman who settled in Dubuque in 1833, five years before Iowa became a U.S. territory and 13 years before it achieved statehood.<sup>1</sup> In the decades that followed, the state’s Jewish population remained small but gradually increased, spreading to at least 35 different towns and cities (see map).<sup>2</sup> Lone Jews could be found in Lime Springs, Atlantic, and elsewhere, while small clusters of Jews settled in places like Burlington, Ottumwa, and Muscatine, where they worked as peddlers and as merchants, especially in the clothing business.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Oscar Fleishaker, “The Illinois-Iowa Jewish Community on the Banks of the Mississippi River” (Ph.D. diss., Yeshiva University, 1957), 7–8.

2. The population was an estimated 16 by 1846 and about 500 by 1860. Michael J. Bell, “‘True Israelites of America’: The Story of the Jews of Iowa,” *Annals of Iowa* 53 (1994), 88–89. The count of towns and cities is based on my survey of American Jewish newspapers. Using local newspapers, histories, and firsthand accounts, Simon Glazer comes to the same number. Simon Glazer, *The Jews of Iowa: A Complete History and Accurate Account of Their Religious, Social, Economical and Educational Progress in This State; a History of the Jews of Europe, North and South America in Modern Times, and a Brief History of Iowa* (Des Moines, 1904), 208.

3. See, for example, *Jewish Messenger*, 10/13/1876, 5; *Israelite*, 3/23/1855, 296; 2/22/1856, 269; *American Israelite*, 10/12/1875, 5; 12/7/1877, 6; Glazer, *The Jews of Iowa*, 203–7. Effective July 3, 1874, the *Israelite* changed its name to the *American Israelite*.



*Alexander Levi of Dubuque, from the Charles Aldrich Autograph Collection, State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines.*

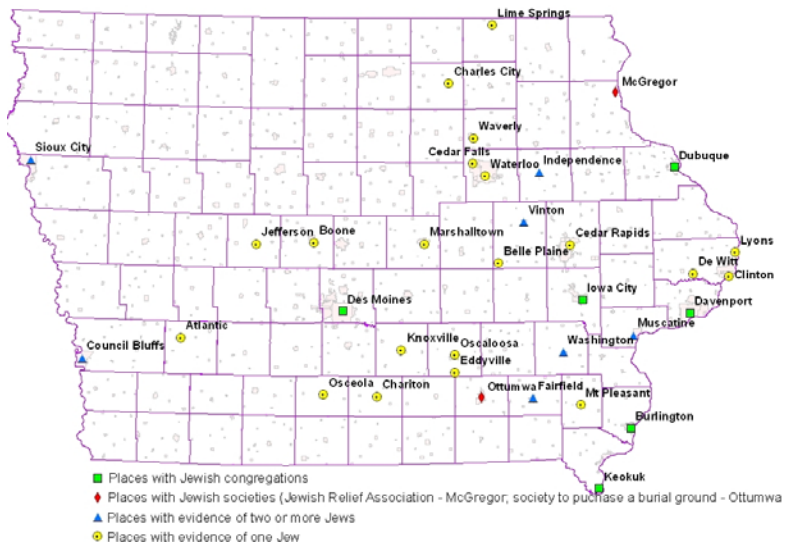
By the 1850s enough Jews had gathered in Dubuque and in the major Mississippi river towns of Keokuk and Davenport to organize Jewish communal life in the state for the first time. These Jews banded together for social and intellectual communion, Sabbath and holiday celebrations, and, as Keokuk Jews wrote in 1855, “for the purpose of purchasing ground for a burying place, assisting of the sick and arranging for meeting for synagogue purposes.”<sup>4</sup> Jewish literary societies and fraternal lodges were organized in various communities, and the first congregation was founded in Keokuk in 1855, followed by Burlington (1856), Iowa City (1859), Davenport (1862), Dubuque (1863), and Des Moines (1873).<sup>5</sup> The founding period of Jewish

4. *Israelite*, 8/24/1855, 54; 5/18/1855, 358; 9/28/1855, 90.

5. On fraternal orders and literary societies, see *Occident* 14 (1856), 504; *Israelite*, 6/26/1856, 2; *Jewish Messenger*, 8/5/1859, 36; *Occident*, July 1863, 43; *Israelite*, 1/17/1862, 230; 9/12/1873, 6; 7/26/1872, 11; *Jewish Messenger*, 7/17/1874, 2; *American Israelite*, 12/10/1875, 10. For congregations, see *Israelite*, 5/18/1855, 358; 2/22/1856, 269; 10/14/1859, 119; *Occident* 19 (1862), 522–23; *Jewish Messen-*

## MAP

## LOCATIONS OF JEWS IN IOWA, 1855–1877



life in Iowa came to a close in 1877 with the dedication of the first synagogue building in the state in Keokuk.<sup>6</sup>

Iowa Jews were part of a mass migration that brought some 250,000 European Jews into the United States between 1820 and 1877.<sup>7</sup> Whereas previously America's small Jewish population had resided predominantly in port cities on the eastern seaboard, now they went west with the expanding nation.<sup>8</sup> Many Jewish men were peddlers who moved through the hinterland for their livelihood, and many relocated repeatedly in search of

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ger, 7/10/1863, 13; *Israelite*, 11/14/1873, 6. The Jews of McGregor organized a "Jewish Relief Association" in 1865, and the Jews in Ottumwa organized to purchase a burial ground in 1875. *Israelite*, 3/17/1865, 301; 10/12/1875, 5.

6. *American Israelite*, 8/3/1877, 4.

7. Leon A. Jick, *The Americanization of the Synagogue, 1820–1870* (Hanover, NH, 1976), 26, 17–18; Isaac Mayer Wise, *The Western Journal of Isaac Mayer Wise, 1877* (Berkeley, CA, 1974), 4; Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven, CT, 2004), 63.

8. Jonathan Sarna, "Port Jews in the Atlantic: Further Thoughts," *Jewish History* 20 (2006), 213–19.

a better economic situation.<sup>9</sup> Composed early on of such ambitious and mobile young men, some congregations—including those in Keokuk, Davenport, and Dubuque, for instance—were founded, went defunct, and then were reestablished. Even more permanent institutions faced considerable challenges, however.<sup>10</sup>

The small number of Jews made it challenging to procure the quorum of ten Jewish men required for prayer, and the limited resources and religious skills of migrants hindered adherence to the ancient Jewish legal codes governing details of time, food, and bodies. In Europe, where Jews were restricted in residence and travel, these functions of Jewish life had been organized through local government-supported communal bodies. In England and France, Jewish communal life was also organized on larger national and regional scales, but in German lands, where most Jewish immigrants came from, local institutions, or *gemeinde*, within specific towns and cities were the exclusive medium of Jewish interaction and identification.

These communal structures, served by government-appointed rabbis, regularized the relationship between Jews and the state and formalized community on a local scale. Even with the rise of the controversial Reform movement, which sought to harmonize Judaism with Enlightenment ideas, the vast majority of institutional communities contained all Jews in one place within a single social body, no matter their varying proclivities and pieties. This ensured consistency and integrity of religious practice, which was based in part on *minhag*, or rite, which allowed for diversity in liturgy and practice between, for example, Germany and Poland.<sup>11</sup> In the United States, however,

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9. Louis C. Hunter, *Steamboats on the Western Rivers: An Economic and Technological History* (Cambridge, MA, 1949); Hasia R. Diner, *A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820–1880* (Baltimore, 1992), 62.

10. *Israelite*, 3/28/1856, 307; *American Israelite*, 7/10/1874, 5; Glazer, *The Jews of Iowa*, 221; Jack Seymour Wolfe, *A Century with Iowa Jewry: As Complete a History as Could Be Obtained of Iowa Jewry from 1833 through 1940* (Des Moines, 1941), 239.

11. R. Liberles, "Emancipation and the Structure of the Jewish Community in the Nineteenth Century," *The Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 31, no. 1 (1986), 51–67; Jay R. Berkovitz, *The Shaping of Jewish Identity in Nineteenth-Century France* (Detroit, 1989); Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (Detroit, 1995); J. J. Petuchowski, "Abraham Geiger and Samuel Holdheim: Their Differences in Germany and Repercussions in America," *The Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 22, no. 1 (1977), 139–59.



Jews from all over Europe with a variety of traditions could and did move as relatively unencumbered individuals throughout a vast continent. As they did, they found few Jewish institutions and no official means of identifying, let alone compelling, group membership or personal observance apart from voluntary affiliation.

In the small, independent communities that Jews created, it was an achievement when, for example, during the autumn high holidays of 1862, members of the Iowa City congregation “suspended our business the past Rosch Hashona [New Year’s] and celebrated the day in its usual custom and shall do the same on the coming Day of Atonement.”<sup>12</sup> Likewise, it was notable that the young men of Davenport managed to procure a Torah scroll and two high holiday prayer books from New York in 1857 and that Dubuque had a *shochet*, or kosher butcher, as early as 1863.<sup>13</sup> There were occasional traditionalists, such as Rabbi Joshua Falk Cohen, a distinguished Hebrew scholar who lived briefly with his family in Keokuk before his death in 1865, but punctilious observance was the exception.<sup>14</sup> Ambitious young men far from Jewish resources and authorities often put business ahead of religious life. In 1875 in Keokuk—arguably the most established congregation in Iowa—ten women were allowed to count as a prayer quorum on Sabbath mornings instead of the traditional ten men because, in the words of one member, “Many a time we could not open at all if we had to wait for our men, who always make the well-known excuse: ‘We like to come, but we can not lose the best business day in the week.’”<sup>15</sup>

Some communities were able to hire *hazan*im—non-rabbinic religious functionaries—to teach, perform ritual tasks, and lead services. In 1862 Davenport Jews briefly employed the first Jewish religious leader in Iowa, Henry Loewenthal, most recently

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12. *Israelite*, 10/10/1862, 106.

13. *Israelite*, 8/28/1857, 62; *Occident*, July 1863, 43.

14. *Occident*, February 1865, 47.

15. *American Israelite*, 11/19/1875, 5. The nineteenth-century American work week was six days, and in many places laws prohibited work on Sunday. Alexis McCrossen, *Holy Day, Holiday: The American Sunday* (Ithaca, NY, 2001).

of Buffalo, New York, who soon opened a school and began directing a small choir. In the 1870s he was succeeded by the Rev. Mr. Fall.<sup>16</sup> Dubuque hired Rev. A. Alexander as teacher and minister in 1863 and Rev. L. Schlessinger in 1867.<sup>17</sup> In the late 1860s and early 1870s Keokuk was served by a string of men, including Revs. Schwed, I. M. Sugenheimer, M. Strauss, and Ferdinand Becker.<sup>18</sup> The turnover in these jobs indicates the difficulty of finding and retaining religious leaders in Iowa, especially since few congregations had the means to provide for candidates' traveling expenses.<sup>19</sup>

Although there were few religious functionaries in America, independent-minded Jews could hire and fire at will—and did so regularly. In the 1860s Rev. Loewenthal of Davenport complained that local Jews did not seem to want a religious leader at all. His congregants were, he wrote, “sweetly hoping to return to their former comforts of no Teacher, no *Shochet*, no *Hazan* and no *Mohel* [ritual circumcisor] and above all no need of going to the house of prayer every Sabbath.”<sup>20</sup>

If congregants could choose to hire whomever they wanted, or no one at all, qualified individuals could also choose to refuse to help. In 1862 a man in Iowa City who had the skills to lead services pompously gave himself the title of rabbi, but also went hunting and riding on the Sabbath and refused to lead high holiday services.<sup>21</sup> With the constant relocation and lack of regulation of religious leaders, it was also difficult to know whom exactly a congregation was hiring. Keokuk correspondent Cassi Sembach complained in 1871 that applicants to serve small-town congregations were, “with a few exceptions, persons of low moral character, or possessing no merit for the position they are to fill.”<sup>22</sup>

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16. *Jewish Messenger*, 4/11/1862, 113; *Israelite*, 9/12/1873, 6.

17. *Occident*, July 1863, 43.

18. *Israelite*, 8/26/1870, 11; 8/11/1871, 7; 1/17/1873, 7; *American Israelite* 7/10/1874, 5.

19. *Israelite*, 7/1/1870, 11.

20. *Israelite*, 7/11/1862, 10.

21. *Israelite*, 10/10/1862, 106.

22. *Israelite*, 8/4/1871, 6.

Such reports appeared in the nascent American Jewish press, which played a central role in local Jewish life. Jews throughout the state of Iowa subscribed to Jewish publications; used them to seek information, advice, and religious leaders; and wrote to them describing their communities and experiences.<sup>23</sup> In the absence of established religion and accessible resources, Jewish newspapers became the central means of creating and disseminating authority, information, and community, in the process shaping local Jewish life and creating a national American Jewry.

In documenting the American Jewish experience, historians have produced many valuable regional and local studies, which only secondarily address larger stories of national institutions and intellectual trends. While these local studies have a tendency to present their subjects as inherently coherent, independent, and distinct, national studies either sidestep issues of geography or focus on New York and other large cities, using demographic measures and communal persistence into the twentieth century as measures of significance, thus marginalizing Jewish communities in places like Iowa.<sup>24</sup> Using the press not just as a sup-

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23. *Occident* 19 (1861), 522–23; *Occident*, April 1862, 3.

24. The *ur*-history of Iowa Jews is Simon Glazer, *The Jews of Iowa*. Rabbi Glazer's 1904 work set the template for later studies in gathering information from local newspapers and directories as well as from the reminiscences of Iowa Jews, with relatively little attention to the American Jewish press. While helpful in providing data about Iowa Jews historically and contemporaneously, such studies, most of which were written by local leaders for communal anniversaries, tend toward grandiose celebrations of Jews in Iowa and lachrymose laments of their demographic decline. See also Wolfe, *A Century with Iowa Jewry*; Frank Rosenthal, *The Jews of Des Moines: The First Century* (Des Moines, 1957); Fleishaker, "The Illinois-Iowa Jewish Community"; Bernard Shuman, *A History of the Sioux City Jewish Community, 1869 to 1969* (Sioux City, 1969); and Bell, "True Israelites of America." For other local studies, see also, for example, Steven Hertzberg, *Strangers within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta, 1845–1915* (Philadelphia, 1978); Ellen Eisenberg, Ava F. Cahn, and William Toll, *Jews of the Pacific Coast: Reinventing Community on America's Edge* (Seattle, 2009). For the emphasis on urbanism, especially New York, in American Jewish history, see Hasia Diner, *The Jews of the United States, 1654–2000* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2006); and idem, *A Time for Gathering*. Deborah Dash Moore, *At Home in America: Second Generation New York Jews* (New York, 1983), 4, has argued that "New York Jews devised the grammar of American Jewish life." On debates about the significance of region and for an argument that small towns significantly shaped Jewish life in a later period, see Lee Shai Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America: A History* (New Haven, CT, 2005), 8. Whether or not Jewish life has been decisively shaped by particular places, states, or re-

plementary source but as a central tool for understanding the formation of identity and community shows that the relationship between local Jewish communities and national ideas and institutions has in fact always been fully interdependent and mutually constitutive.<sup>25</sup>

That was especially the case in the nineteenth century, when American Judaism was just coming into being as a lived practice, a meaningful community, and a conceptual category. Local communities were deeply enmeshed in larger networks of interaction, and Jewish communities in places like Iowa, although demographically small, were central to larger considerations about the scope of Jewish community and the meaning of America for Jewish life. A growing Jewish population distant from the urban centers of American Jewish life, Iowa Jews were enthusiastic newspaper correspondents and frequent objects of curiosity to other American Jews and so are a particularly fruitful case study of the mutual interactions and collaborations that created local communities and what came to be understood as a national American Judaism.

THE AMERICAN JEWISH PRESS dates to 1843, when traditionalist Isaac Leeser began publishing the monthly *Occident and American Jewish Advocate* in Philadelphia. It was joined in 1854 by the weekly *Israelite*, edited by reformer Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise of Cincinnati, and in 1857 by New York's weekly *Jewish*

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gions, scholars would do well to note the ways in which our historical subjects perceived such differences and incorporated them into their self-conceptions and actions. Larger studies of nineteenth-century American Judaism have talked about various places but without investigating the centrality of mobility and geographic considerations to the formation of Jewish community and thought. Diner, *The Jews of the United States*; Sarna, *American Judaism*; Lance J. Sussman, *Isaac Leeser and the Making of American Judaism* (Detroit, 1996); S. D. Temkin, *Isaac Mayer Wise: Shaping American Judaism* (New York, 1992); Jick, *The Americanization of the Synagogue*.

25. James W. Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* (New York, 2009); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York, 1998). On the role of the American Jewish press in spreading information in this period, see Diner, *A Time for Gathering*, 207. For a transatlantic perspective on the Jewish press in this period, see Adam Mendelsohn, "Tongue Ties: Religion, Culture and Commerce in the Making of the Anglophone Jewish Diaspora, 1840-1870" (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 2008), 197.

*Messenger*, founded by Rabbi Samuel Myer Isaacs. As early as November 1854, four months after its inauguration, the *Israelite* found an Iowa subscriber in Herman Miller of Keokuk. In the next year alone it would add subscribers in Davenport, Muscatine, and Vinton.<sup>26</sup> By far the most popular of the papers, the *Israelite* at least once actively sought out Iowa subscriptions; in 1868 it sent a traveling agent through southern Iowa and elsewhere in the Midwest.<sup>27</sup> The *Occident's* first subscriber in the state was David Kahn of Cedar Rapids. It gradually expanded its reach to Independence, Beloit, Dubuque, Cedar Falls, Davenport, and Muscatine.<sup>28</sup> By 1875, "A. T." of Ottumwa could confirm that the *Israelite* "has made its appearance here, and I will guarantee a circulation of the paper, which it surely merits." That same year "Esox" of Burlington reported, "There are beside your humble correspondent a number of subscribers to your paper living here." A Lime Springs Jew reported to the *Jewish Messenger* in 1876, "We read the *Messenger* and lend it to one family here to read, and after they read it we get it and send it to a friend in Vermont."<sup>29</sup> Throughout the state and the nation, Jewish newspapers were familiar and welcome visitors.

The content of these papers was eclectic, including editorials, sermons, literary pieces, travel accounts, and advertisements as well as international and domestic news. Individual Jews wrote in to document marriages and deaths or simply to correspond with editors. In addition, the papers published reports from local communities.<sup>30</sup> In 1856, having heard of the creation of a Jewish literary society in Davenport, Iowa, Isaac Leeser wrote in the *Occident*, "Would Mr. [Benjamin] Eiseman, the Secretary, have the kindness to inform us with regard to the number of Israelites in his city, the state of the congregation, and the names

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26. *Israelite*, 11/17/1854, 152; 2/16/1855, 256; 3/23/1855, 296; 11/30/1855, 175; 12/14/1855, 191.

27. *Israelite*, 12/11/1868, 4.

28. *Occident*, October 1856, 2; March 1858, 2; April 1862, 2; April 1863, 2; July 1863, 2; May 1864, 2. I was not able to obtain *Jewish Messenger* subscription data about Iowa.

29. *American Israelite*, 10/12/1875, 5; 10/22/1875, 2; *Jewish Messenger*, 10/13/1876, 5.

30. See, for example, *Jewish Messenger*, 4/24/1874, 6; *American Israelite*, 10/22/1875, 7.

of its officers and also those of his society? . . . We should also be happy to obtain authentic information respecting other settlements of Israelites through Iowa, where we believe they are numerous in many towns." Eiseman replied in the next number, reporting that there was not yet a congregation in Davenport, which he blamed on recalcitrant married men, but that "regarding different congregations in Iowa . . . there are at present, as far as my knowledge reaches, a congregation each in Dubuque, in Burlington and Keokuk, all in Iowa."<sup>31</sup>

Leeser was not the only Jewish editor interested in learning about Jewish affairs in the state. In 1859 the *Jewish Messenger* reported of Iowa City, "A congregation has been established at this flourishing place. We have not learned particulars, but shall be happy to insert any information communicated to us on the subject." Local Jews happily obliged, expressing the pleasure and honor they took in their correspondence. "A Looker On," who wrote from Iowa City to the *Israelite* in 1862, considered it a "privilege" to "publish a few lines in your valuable sheet concerning Judaism in this part of the West." In 1869 "Reader" wrote to the *Israelite* from Keokuk, "Although having been a regular reader of yours since your journal made its first appearance, I never yet undertook to address you until now, hoping you will not refuse to hear even from this little place." In 1875 "Esox" of Burlington reported, "Though our place is well enough known in the mercantile world, yet you and many of your readers have probably never heard of it in regard to Jewish affairs. . . . But permit me first a little space for picturing to you our place." After outlining the rapid development of the city itself, he described the Jewish community and its institutions, reporting, "There live in the city about twenty-five [Jewish] families, and they are all in well-to-do circumstances."<sup>32</sup>

In such reports, correspondents included the people in their communities, the state of Jewish affairs, and the particularities of

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31. *Occident* 14 (1856), 504, 550–51.

32. *Jewish Messenger*, 8/5/1859, 36; *Israelite*, 10/10/1862, 106; 1/15/1869, 2; *American Israelite*, 10/22/1875, 2. A. T. of Ottumwa wrote in 1875, "It is indeed a refreshing privilege to have occasion to let you hear something from these quarters and to publicly accord to the Israelites of this town credit for the inauguration and successful efforts accomplished." *American Israelite*, 10/12/1875, 5.

their towns. In September 1855 the Jews of Davenport provided the details that they had “bought a parcel of land for \$200 to be used as a burial ground . . . appointed a *Shochet* [butcher] and intend to organize a congregation, counting already about thirty families.” In June of the following year Jews of Burlington wrote of their new congregation, B’nai Sholom, “At present it consists of 23 members,” adding, “Mr. Jacob Shroder is President; Joseph Lehman, Treasurer; M. A. Newmark, Secretary.”<sup>33</sup>

News, for these Iowa Jews, was not the idle sharing of information but was part of a deeper impulse to claim space and assert their presence within the emerging social geography of the American Jewish press. So enthusiastically and with such detail did Iowa Jews correspond that it was almost as if a place did not exist if it was not reported in the Jewish press. In 1874 Cassi Sembach of Keokuk, noting that “it has been a very long time indeed since anything from this section of Iowa has appeared in the *Israelite*,” wrote in “to show that we are not dormant.”<sup>34</sup>

Iowa Jews were also known about and imagined from afar through travel reports by Jewish leaders, namely Wise and his friend and colleague Rabbi Max Lilienthal. In 1856 Wise traveled up the Mississippi River to Iowa as part of a larger western tour. He described the prosperous situation of Keokuk and detailed how the local Jews had “formed a congregation, bought a lot of ground for a burial place, and attempt to build up a flourishing congregation.” In Davenport and Rock Island, Illinois, he found 40 men in possession of a burial ground and a *shochet*, but also local rivalry across the state border, as “each place wanted the temporal synagogue located at its very door.” Rock Island Jews had taken the first steps, and he was sure that soon “the best number of our friends in Davenport will join them.”<sup>35</sup> Twenty-one years later Lilienthal went to Keokuk to consecrate the new synagogue. He admired the city itself, praised the activ-

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33. *Israelite*, 9/28/1855, 90; 6/26/1856, 2.

34. *American Israelite*, 7/10/1874, 5. The press served not only what theorist James W. Carey calls a “transmission” role, relaying information and arguments, but also a “ritual” role, projecting communal ideals, encouraging fellowship and participation, and engaging in the creation and maintenance of an American Jewish world. Carey, *Communication as Culture*.

35. *Israelite*, 8/1/1856, 29.

ities of the local Jewish ladies, and then provided a history of the congregation.<sup>36</sup> Lilienthal and Wise's travel reports, like the correspondence of local Jews, shared information and gave far-flung Jews a glimpse into the lives of their coreligionists elsewhere.

If Jews in different places came to know about and identify with one other through the circulation of information, they further expressed and fostered translocal identities through the circulation of money. As the nation's primary Jewish institution, the press played an important role in coordinating and advertising charitable efforts for Jews in various places. While Iowa Jews offered philanthropic aid to their coreligionists in Europe and the Holy Land, thus identifying as part of the global Jewish people, beginning in the 1860s and 1870s, they increasingly supported and identified with their coreligionists elsewhere in the nation.<sup>37</sup> During the Passover holiday of 1867 and 1868, Abraham Greenwald of Dubuque donated 238 pounds of meat to Chicago's United Hebrew Relief Association, and the Jews of Davenport donated \$51 "in Behalf of the Suffering Israelites in New Orleans" during the 1867 yellow fever epidemic.<sup>38</sup>

Iowa Jews were also very active in B'nai B'rith, the national Jewish fraternal order, and supported its orphan asylum in Cleveland, the only such institution for Jewish youth in the country.<sup>39</sup> Moses Bloom, a successful clothing merchant soon to be elected mayor of Iowa City, had been an *Israelite* subscriber

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36. *American Israelite*, 8/3/1877, 4; 8/10/1877, 5.

37. On Iowa Jews' international connections and philanthropy, see *Jewish Messenger*, 12/1/1865, 165; Fleishaker, "The Illinois-Iowa Jewish Community," 66; *Jewish Messenger*, 12/14/1877; *Israelite*, 5/10/1867, 3; 3/19/1869, 6; 2/26/1869, 6; *Jewish Messenger*, 5/31/1872, 3; *Israelite*, 8/16/1872, 10.

38. *Occident*, June 1867, 32; *Jewish Messenger*, 11/8/1867, 2.

39. B'nai B'rith also contributed to the development of local Jewish life and a sense of national communality. See Cornelia Wilhelm, *The Independent Orders of B'nai B'rith and True Sisters: Pioneers of a New Jewish Identity, 1843-1914* (Detroit, 2011); and Deborah Dash Moore, *B'nai B'rith and the Challenge of Ethnic Leadership* (Albany, NY, 1981). By 1873 there were B'nai B'rith lodges in McGregor, Davenport, and Keokuk, and in 1875 Burlington founded one. *Israelite*, 3/21/1873, 5; *American Israelite*, 12/10/1875, 5. Among those who attended the Benai Berith Convention in Chicago the next year were A. Kohn from McGregor and S. Klein of Keokuk. *Jewish Messenger*, 1/23/1874, 5. B'nai B'rith District Grand President Henry Ullman visited Keokuk in 1877. *American Israelite*, 7/20/1877, 2.





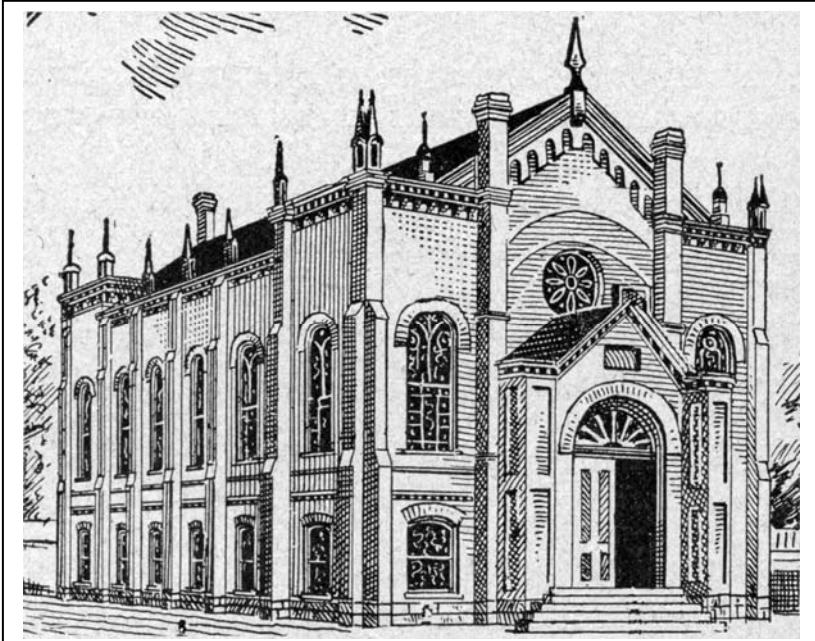
*Moses Bloom, shown here in the 1850s, was a successful merchant in Iowa City and eventually became mayor of the city. Photo from Isaac A. Wetherby Collection, State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.*

since 1862; in 1871 he donated \$300 to the asylum in memory of his wife, Rosa. The donation was made on the condition that "a prayer be offered by the orphans every year on the anniversary of her death," a Jewish tradition requiring a quorum of ten Jewish men over age 13, which was hard to come by in Iowa City.<sup>40</sup> Seventeen individuals from McGregor made more modest gifts to the asylum in 1872, ranging from \$1 to \$5, and in 1877 more than a dozen individuals from Keokuk, half of them women, donated \$2 each.<sup>41</sup>

The assistance flowed both ways. It was commonly assumed that Jews could rely on their coreligionists in other cities for aid, so when the Jews of Keokuk sought to build a synagogue in the 1870s, local correspondent Cassi Sembach wrote, "As our congre-

40. *Israelite*, 4/18/1862, 335; 2/10/1871, 10. Bloom was also elected to the state legislature in 1877. Glazer, *The Jews of Iowa*, 321-26.

41. *Israelite*, 4/12/1872, 7; *American Israelite*, 6/8/1877, 7. On the orphan asylum, see Gary Edward Polster, *Inside Looking Out: The Cleveland Jewish Orphan Asylum, 1868-1924* (Kent, OH, 1990).



By 1877, Keokuk's Jews had raised enough money to complete the first synagogue building in the state, the B'nai Israel Temple. Sketch from Simon Glazer, *The Jews of Iowa* (Des Moines, 1904).

gation numbers less than twenty members, we will of necessity have to call for outside help."<sup>42</sup>

In a highly mobile nation with Jews widely dispersed, the press became a crucial medium for circulating information and familiarity, serving both to link Jews and to represent their new settings to themselves and to others.<sup>43</sup> Wise described travel reports as meant "for the instruction and amusement of our readers," but they were also intended, in the words of Leeser—who traveled considerably but never made it to Iowa—to "prompt

42. *American Israelite*, 7/10/1874, 5.

43. R. Glanz, "The Spread of Jewish Communities through America before the Civil War," *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science* 15 (1974), 15; idem, "Where the Jewish Press Was Distributed in Pre-Civil War America," *Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly* 5 (1972), 1-14. Wise repeatedly argued that the *Israelite* had "at least double the number of readers that we have subscribers" or "five times the number of its actual subscribers." *Israelite*, 7/11/1856, 4; 8/1/1856, 28.

good-will and unity among all Israelites" by "furnish[ing] a connecting link to distant congregations [and] by informing them of the passing events in which all are interested."<sup>44</sup> These "connecting links," which were also created through local correspondence, helped fuel a national charitable economy in which Jews from different parts of the nation supported each other financially. Efforts to know and to help Jews in various places helped local communities conceive of themselves as part of an emerging if inchoate American Jewish network.

AS IOWA became a subject in the Jewish press and a part of an emerging national community, local correspondents and editors alike not only described the facts of Jewish life there, but also sought to understand its meaning. According to Nathan Hoffheimer, writing to the *Israelite* in December 1855, Keokuk's congregation gathered into the fold "many who have been *wanderers* in Israel and particularly estranged from the God of their fathers and from the hand that brought them out of the 'Land of Egypt,' and from the arm that saved them from the house of bondage." Here Egypt represented Europe, the wanderers were Jewish immigrants, and Keokuk was not only a bustling commercial river town but also a promised land in which Jews would return to their brethren and faith. The next year Benjamin Eiseman wrote of Davenport, "Where immigration finds its way, a part of Israel's children always follows. . . . The reason is, that our sacred cause is expounded everywhere and has its followers on the whole globe." Eiseman, like Hoffheimer, explained his Iowa town as one participant in the global project of Jewish history and community.<sup>45</sup>

Tellingly, Keokuk's congregation was named the Benevolent Children of Jerusalem, and then Benai Israel (Children of

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44. *Occident* 15 (1857), 3; 4 (1846), 5.

45. *Israelite*, 12/14/1855, 189; *Occident* 14 (1856), 550–51. Later Iowa Jewish historians would make similar arguments about the global meaning of Iowa Jewry's inevitable triumph. For instance, Simon Glazer wrote, in *The Jews of Iowa*, "The Jews have been makers of history wherever they have chanced to penetrate, and . . . on their march to carry Jehovah's banner to its goal, they have distinguished themselves with such remarkable achievements that the history of the smallest group of them is instructive to the whole human race" (156).

Israel), which was also the name of Davenport's congregation.<sup>46</sup> The Dubuque and Des Moines congregations, founded in 1863 and 1873, respectively, were both called Bene Yeshurun, a variant form of the same name, which used the poetic biblical name for Israel.<sup>47</sup> These biblical self-understandings expressed the desire of Iowa Jews to see their specific places as residing within the larger religious geography of traditional Judaism. Rabbi Wise, during his 1856 trip, wrote, "I have not the least doubt, Keokuk will be a considerable congregation in but a few years. . . . Our brethren are faithful, attached sincerely to the faith of Israel, and work incessantly to build a nest to the wandering bird."<sup>48</sup> Drawing from Proverbs and Psalms, Wise compared Iowa Jews to wandering birds; they found in their new nation and state protection like that offered by the ancient Temple in Jerusalem.

If biblical metaphors helped situate Iowa Jewry within the expanse of Jewish experience, providentialism and ideas of progress were used to gloss over the difficulties of Jewish life. "Onward and forward is the watchword of Israel. . . . We are progressing slowly but surely," Benjamin Eiseman wrote of Davenport, adding optimistically, "We know no such word as fail, with the guidance from an All-wise Providence." Keokuk's congregation was, according to Hoffheimer, "imbued with the true spirit of progress. . . . With the smiles of Providence we hope to have the most respectable congregation in point of members, as well as high morality, that will be in this great Des Moines Valley." Marveling at the beauty and industrial progress of the

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46. *Israelite*, 5/18/1855, 358; 12/14/1855, 189; 1/17/1862, 230. B'nai, Bene, and Benai are all variant transliterations of the Hebrew for "Children of."

47. *Israelite*, 9/15/1865, 85; 11/14/1873, 6. The first Ashkenazi synagogue in New York, founded in 1825, was also called B'nai Jeshurun. Sarna, *American Judaism*, 56. *Yeshurun* and *Jeschurun* are alternate transliterations of the same Hebrew word. It is found four times in the Bible. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, s.v. "Jeshurun," accessed 12/19/2013, <http://go.galegroup.com/ps/infomark.do?action=interpret&eisbn=9780028660974&prodId=GVRL&userGroupName=imcpl1111&type=aboutBook&version=1.0&authCount=1&u=imcpl1111>. The publication of modern orthodox German rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, founded in 1854, was also called *Jeschurun*. Nils Roemer, *Jewish Scholarship and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Germany: Between History and Faith* (Madison, WI, 2005), 53.

48. *Israelite*, 8/1/1856, 29 (drawing on Psalm 84:4).

Midwest, Wise likewise affirmed his beliefs in the “progress of mankind” and in a “rational providence watching over the destinies of humanity.”<sup>49</sup>

Providence and progress were powerful concepts in nineteenth-century America, seen as mutually supportive and closely linked to Manifest Destiny, the belief in the inevitable westward expansion of the United States. Jews borrowed from these optimistic ideas, redeploying them in the name of Judaism. The implicit argument was that, like the nation itself, Jewish life in Iowa, the West, and throughout America would progress in piety and through space under benevolent providential guidance. Leeser summarized this view in 1859 when discussing the new congregation in Iowa City. “As civilization progresses in the West and erects its monuments, so Judaism progresses along side of its younger sister.”<sup>50</sup> Those who appealed to this combination of providence and progress minimized the importance of individual action, confidently asserting that flourishing Jewish life was an inevitable outgrowth of the trajectory of Jewish and American history.

Even as they explained Iowa Jewish life within the framework of world Jewry, however, Iowa Jews continued to think of themselves, and to be thought of, as locally distinct. Distant Jewish leaders tended to think of Jews in the various Iowa cities and towns as one body within the state, although locals usually saw themselves instead as part of a specific town’s community. When Leeser requested information about “settlements of Israelites through Iowa,” Eiseman—whose community actually included Illinois Jews across the Mississippi River—knew enough to name the congregations but “the names of the officers I do not know.” A rare exception was an 1856 letter written by the Jews of Burlington offering “our sincere thanks to the Rev. Dr. Wise not only in our name, but in the name of the Jews throughout the state of Iowa.” On his trip to Keokuk to dedicate the congregation’s new synagogue, Max Lilienthal discussed its place in relationship to other communities in the state. “There are other towns in Iowa in which our brethren dwell in larger

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49. *Occident* 14 (1856), 550–51; *Israelite*, 12/14/ 1855, 189; 7/25/1856, 22. See also *Israelite*, 8/28/1857, 62.

50. *Occident*, 10/14/1859, 119.

numbers and possessing more wealth than in Keokuk; but so far they have not organized for the purpose of erecting synagogues." Even as he singled out Keokuk for praise, Lilienthal continued to think about the state of Iowa as a meaningful geographic unit for understanding Jewish life.<sup>51</sup>

In the Jewish press, Iowa as a state was noted for its remarkable economic growth as well as its Sunday closing laws, which banned work during the Christian Sabbath and overwhelmingly affected Jews. In regard to religious life, Iowa was known for its ignorant local reporting on Jewish issues, active Jewish convert missionaries, and sectarianism in public life.<sup>52</sup> Iowa was also mentioned in relationship to various schemes for Jewish agricultural colonies, which many believed would enable more stable economic and religious life.<sup>53</sup> Understood as part of a state that epitomized American Protestant activism and rural life, Jewish communities within Iowa cities were used as powerful examples of persistent religious life in the face of difficult odds. As Leeser wrote of new congregations in the West in 1859, "Leavenworth City, St. Joseph, Weston and Iowa City are nearly at the edge of civilization and in all these places Judaism has root and branch." In 1863 he wrote of the new congregation in Dubuque, "It can easily be imagined that every member is taxed very much to keep up this new society; but we believe the sacrifices are cheerfully brought in the interest of religion."<sup>54</sup>

The *Jewish Messenger* also praised the Jews of Dubuque for having "determined to establish regular public worship in accordance with the customs of their forefathers." "It is astonish-

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51. *Occident* 14 (1856), 550–51; *Israelite*, 2/22/1856, 269; *American Israelite* 8/3/1877, 4. Jack Wolfe, *A Century with Iowa Jewry*, 55, claimed that peddlers' mobility, the rise of Jewish institutions in the state, and developments in transportation and communication made it so that "the Jews of this state [were] molded into one of the most closely integrated groups scattered over a wide area to be found anywhere in America. . . . The religion, culture, social life, and habits of the Jews of Iowa are amazingly uniform throughout the whole state." Whether this was true in the 1940s or not, it certainly was not in the mid-nineteenth century; his comments point to the persistence of the impulse to declare various geographic units as containing a coherent, unified Jewish community.

52. *Occident* 13 (1855), 558–61; *Israelite*, 8/14/1857, 46; 11/26/1858, 165; 12/3/1858, 174; 12/26/1873, 6; *American Israelite*, 5/26/1876, 6.

53. *Israelite*, 8/16/1872, 10; *Jewish Messenger*, 8/23/1872, 4.

54. *Occident*, 10/14/1859, 119; *Occident*, July 1863, 43.

ing," the author continued, "how many congregations are constantly springing up in the West! . . . We hail with pleasure each addition to the family of Jewish congregations."<sup>55</sup> The description of traditional and familiar Jewish life in Iowa seemed especially important and impressive to Leaser and others. This was their Jewish pastoral ideal: a pristine, empty landscape interrupted not only by industrial power but by the ancient religion of Israel.<sup>56</sup> At a time when many wondered if Jewish life could survive in America at all, its remarkable institution in Iowa served as an example of right religious action that brought new places into an emerging "family of congregations" throughout the nation.<sup>57</sup>

In describing Iowa Jewish life, local Jews and editors alike invoked a complicated nexus of religious ideas to explain and argue for the compatibility of Judaism with life throughout America. They wanted to argue that locale mattered but also that Jews across the United States were part of one people and one religious practice that could thrive in any specific place. Biblical themes, providence, progress, and localism were invoked in reference to other communities, but the case of Iowa was particularly useful as a model of Jewish life persisting in unexpected places. Judaism in the state was cast as normal—the inevitable product of universal Jewish wandering and the workings of providential progress—but also as surprising and remarkable. It was proof that, in short, "Judaism holds equal step with civilization" and could flourish in any environment, be it city or country, north or south, east or west.<sup>58</sup>

THE LINKS created among American Jews and the ideas they developed about their localities fueled and were an expression of institutional plans for greater uniformity and cohesion among

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55. *Jewish Messenger*, 7/10/1863, 13.

56. On the power of the pastoral ideal in nineteenth-century American culture, see Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York, 2000).

57. Harvey Arnold Richman, "The Image of America in the European Hebrew Periodicals of the Nineteenth Century (until 1880)" (Ph.D. diss, University of Texas, 1971).

58. *Israelite*, 11/27/1863, 173.

Jews throughout the United States. Wise's goal in the *Israelite* and on his 1856 midwestern voyage was "elevating Judaism, vis: education, union, and reform," specifically by establishing a college, a national institutional body, and a unified religious practice.<sup>59</sup> Those were the main projects that he, Leiser, and others consistently advocated throughout the nineteenth century, seeking to tame unnerving congregational independence and diversity. It concerned them that the American continent was marked by "some two hundred Jewish congregations, scattered through the length and breadth of this land . . . absolutely distinct from one another in every respect."<sup>60</sup> Drawing on the models of the American nation and Protestant denominations, they believed that this problem could best be solved through a national institutional "union" and a national religious practice, which would formalize existing networks of communication and travel while improving and standardizing religious life.

Beginning in the 1850s and 1860s, there were repeated efforts to establish a union and a college, which Iowa Jews enthusiastically supported.<sup>61</sup> As early as 1855 Herman Friedlander, an active congregational leader in Dubuque, called a meeting in support of a Jewish college. That same year members of his community responded to an appeal in the *Israelite*, donating \$32.50 toward efforts to create Zion College, Wise's first attempted rabbinical seminary in Cincinnati.<sup>62</sup> While such plans were advocated by multiple sources, among Jews in Iowa and throughout the nation those of Wise, who traveled extensively and whose newspaper was the most widely circulated, gained the most traction.

In 1856 Burlington Jews wrote an admiring letter to Wise, stating, "We, the Jewish citizens of Burlington, faithful to our

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59. *Israelite*, 8/1/1856, 29.

60. *Jewish Messenger*, 2/8/1861, 42.

61. For an overview of these efforts, see Joseph Buchler, "The Struggle for Unity: Attempts at Union in American Jewish Life, 1654-1868," *American Jewish Archives* 2 (1949), 21-46, <http://americanjewisharchives.org/publications/journal/>.

62. *Israelite*, 9/15/1855, 85; 8/24/1855, 54; 2/1/1856, 243. Wise went to great lengths to garner local support for the college, but then unilaterally established it in Cincinnati, alienating those same supporters. The school quietly closed around 1856 or 1857. Bertram Wallace Korn, *Eventful Years and Experiences: Studies in Nineteenth-Century American Jewish History* (Cincinnati, 1954), 156-59.



religion, although few in number, and not yet bound into a congregation, have noticed for the last two years the exertions of the Rev. Dr. Wise in behalf of the welfare of the Jewish faith and zeal and sincerity to unite all our brethren in this country into One great congregation." The congregation praised Wise's activities, described him as a "champion," and wrote of its plans to send copies of its resolution to a range of American Jewish publications. Several community members subscribed to the Zion Collegiate Association and requested a printed prospectus with further information. Iowa Jews, familiar with the difficulties of hiring and retaining religious leadership and already linked through the Jewish press to a national community, rallied around the idea of translocal cooperation.<sup>63</sup>

Not only did Jewish leaders advocate the institutional union of American congregations, but Wise and other moderate reformers also insisted that Judaism "must be American in form, principle and spirit."<sup>64</sup> The multiple *minhagim* (rites) that immigrants had brought from Europe had to be eliminated in favor of a unifying rite and practice that was suitable to their new geographic context. Although they praised and affirmed local Jewish communities, Jewish leaders were troubled by religious eclecticism and diversity and believed that a unified religious practice would solve both problems. Wise, for one, worried that "in a course of twenty years we [will] not recognize each other any longer as Jews" because "not only each congregation, but each individual has his own and peculiar reforms."<sup>65</sup> A unified path of reform would prevent that calamity while making Judaism more suitable to American settings, including Iowa.

While Leeser and others hoped that earnest effort and the spread of information would enable the continuation of traditional Jewish practices without their alteration, most Jews in Iowa and elsewhere were drawn to Wise's plan, which advocated national religious uniformity through reform of religious

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63. *Israelite*, 2/22/1856, 269. When Leeser established his short-lived Maimonides College in 1867, Emil Levi of Dubuque was one of the first scholars. *Occident*, December 1867, 42.

64. A. Rubinstein, "Isaac Mayer Wise: A New Appraisal," *Jewish Social Studies* 39 (1977), 68.

65. *Israelite*, 5/30/1856, 380.

practices, specifically through his prayer book, *Minhag America*. Published in 1857 and containing Hebrew as well as German or English translations, it was to be the first step in replacing the chaotic multiplicity of *minhagim* and languages within and among congregations.<sup>66</sup> Wise wrote in 1868 that he was “firmly convinced that *Minhag America* will create liturgical unity among American Israel.”<sup>67</sup> Iowa congregations readily adopted the prayer book, including those in Davenport in 1862, Keokuk in 1869, and Burlington in 1875.<sup>68</sup> In 1873 a Jew wrote from Davenport that while many in the congregation were more conservative than the *Minhag America*, they had agreed to use it “for the sake of peace of the congregation in this country. There is no dispute any longer how to model the service—what there was said in this or that country.”<sup>69</sup> Many Iowa Jews, struggling to create coherent religious life, agreed with Wise that Jewish religious life should take the same, consistent form within their congregations and in others throughout the nation.

Wise advocated religious reforms, but unlike radical German reformers, who tended to think of Judaism as a universalist faith that was already suitable to all locales, he was a pragmatist who pursued reforms that he thought would better enable unification of an American Judaism.<sup>70</sup> In 1868 he wrote to a friend, “When I claim that I know no reform congregations, Judaism and all of its congregations are for me an inseparable and un-touchable whole,” adding, “Judaism only has a future as a na-

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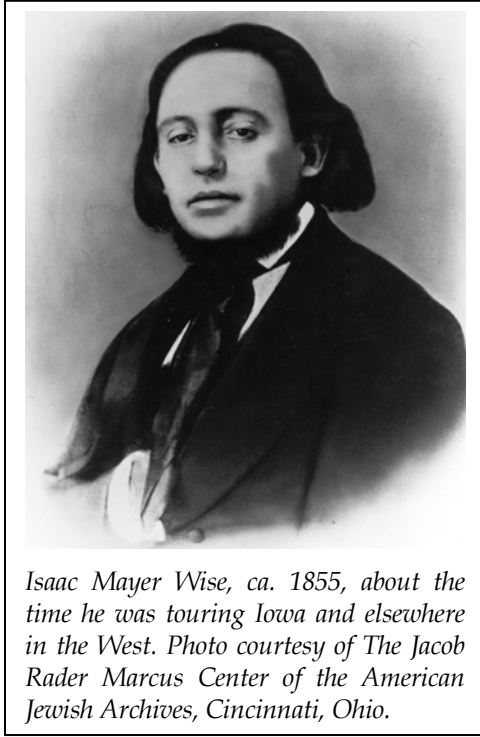
66. L. J. Sussman, “Isaac Leiser and the Protestantization of American Judaism,” *American Jewish Archives* 38 (1986), 4, [http://americanjewisharchives.org/publications/journal/PDF/1986\\_38\\_01\\_00\\_sussman.pdf](http://americanjewisharchives.org/publications/journal/PDF/1986_38_01_00_sussman.pdf); Temkin, *Isaac Mayer Wise*, 124.

67. Wise to Adolph Huebsch, 7/30/1868, Isaac Mayer Wise Digital Archive, <http://americanjewisharchives.org/collections/wise/home.php> (accessed 1/19/2012).

68. *Israelite*, 7/11/1862, 10; *American Israelite*, 8/3/1877, 4; 10/22/1875, 2.

69. *Israelite*, 9/12/1873, 6.

70. On radical reform, see Rubinstein’s discussion of Rabbi David Einhorn of Baltimore in “Isaac Mayer Wise,” 56. See also J. J. Petuchowski, “Abraham Geiger and Samuel Holdheim: Their Differences in Germany and Repercussions in America,” *The Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 22, no. 1 (1977), 139–59; and Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (Detroit, 1995).



tional concept.”<sup>71</sup> In order for Judaism to suit the American environment, where many Jews were mobile and living far from religious resources, he and others believed that it had to shed ritual and other practices that seemed not only outdated but ill-suited to American life, and so reformers eliminated the second day of diasporic holiday celebration, prayer fringes, head coverings in synagogue, kosher dietary laws, exclusively Hebrew prayers, and so on.<sup>72</sup> Moderate reformers thus created a mobile Judaism, with fewer ritual and communal forms, that could be practiced in any American locale.

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71. Wise to Adolph Huebsch, 7/30/1868, Isaac Mayer Wise Digital Archive, <http://americanjewisharchives.org/collections/wise/home.php> (accessed 1/19/2012).

72. Lilienthal argued that the second day was not only unnecessary, but was a burden on merchants. *Asmonean*, 6/1/1854, 53; Bruce L. Ruben, “Max Lilienthal and Isaac M. Wise: Architects of American Reform Judaism,” *American Jewish Archives* 55 (2003), 18, [http://americanjewisharchives.org/publications/journal/PDF/2003\\_55\\_02\\_00\\_ruben.pdf](http://americanjewisharchives.org/publications/journal/PDF/2003_55_02_00_ruben.pdf); Rubinstein, “Isaac Mayer Wise.”

There were some local tensions around reform in Iowa communities, but they were usually resolved in its favor. In 1869 a Keokuk Jew wrote, "There are some of 'Dr. Wise's men' here, as they call us, but not enough to change matters for some time to come." Later that year, however, Keokuk's congregation adopted *Minhag America*. By 1875 they were also using "the three year's cycle of reading the Thora [sic]" instead of the traditional annual cycle, and "the second day of every feast [was] abolished."<sup>73</sup> Cassi Sembach of Keokuk wrote in 1874, "Our people are fast leaving the 'shadow,' to exchange it for the 'light' of our religion." A less supportive Jew from Burlington complained that year that wealthy Jews were instituting "divine service on too much of a reform footing, for instance, worship without hats on and the reader only to read while the congregation is quiet." The next year his community wrote in to list the reforms it had embraced, including the triennial cycle, uncovered heads, and English prayers.<sup>74</sup>

Such reforms were instituted through most of the congregations in the United States, which finally united institutionally in the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC). The UAHC, first proposed in 1871 and officially founded in 1873 by lay leaders aligned with Wise, sought national cooperation and collective religious decision making, insisting that "the congregations must be united organically and systematically" in order "to preserve and elevate Judaism."<sup>75</sup> The UAHC built on the national connections and identifications that the press had fostered, including among Iowa Jews. Cassi Sembach, for instance, embraced these institutional plans, expressing his excitement for the day "when the union of all congregations is secured and the seminary once fairly at work."<sup>76</sup> When the UAHC was raising money in 1873 for a "theological institute," which was established in 1875 in Cincinnati as the Hebrew Union College, it listed men authorized to receive donations in 30 towns in Iowa,

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73. *Israelite*, 1/15/1869, 2; *American Israelite*, 11/19/1875, 5. Traditionally, communities outside of the Land of Israel have observed a second day of each major holiday.

74. *American Israelite*, 7/10/1874, 5; 7/17/1874, 5; 10/22/1875, 2.

75. *Israelite*, 6/23/1871, 8.

76. *American Israelite*, 7/10/1874, 5.

many more than the 7 places in Minnesota and the 11 in Wisconsin, and even more than the 26 in Texas.<sup>77</sup> Messrs. Frankel, Bach & Co. of Oskaloosa collected money towards an indigent students fund in 1875, receiving donations from eight Jews in their own town plus an additional five Jews in Pella, Hampton, and Mason City.<sup>78</sup> Three Vinton Jews donated to the same fund, while A. Levi of Dubuque donated to the college's "sinking fund." Congregations B'nai Israel of Keokuk and B'nai Yeshurun of Des Moines both became members of the UAHC.<sup>79</sup>

Having developed in contact with national leaders and other communities throughout the nation, Jewish communities in Iowa were quick to sign on to institutionalized versions of those connections. Notably, however, while the UAHC sometimes used state-based classifications, it was a national organization without any mediating regional or state-based structures, which meant that many concrete innovations would still require local activism. For instance, Lilienthal used the occasion of his Keokuk visit, three years after the founding of the UAHC, to make a grand statement in support of localized alliances. "In all the States of the Union, where our brethren live scattered in towns and villages, those of one county, at least, should unite" in order to support congregational life. On the national, state, *and* local levels, he concluded his travelogue, "In union is strength!"<sup>80</sup>

While they continued to report on local news and fissures, most Iowa Jews agreed with Lilienthal. For several decades they had developed understandings of the relationship between their towns and larger Jewish collectives. The new institutions and religious ideologies they supported were formed in dialogue with those experiences and built on existing networks of communication and interdependence that Jews in Iowa had come to value and rely upon. Wise and other leaders wanted Judaism to flourish equally in Iowa and any other place in the United States, and so their nationalizing plans formalized the circulation of information and eased Jewish life for those with fewer resources

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77. *Israelite*, 9/19/1873, 6.

78. *American Israelite*, 12/10/1875, 6.

79. *American Israelite*, 3/16/1877, 6; 6/29/1877, 3.

80. *American Israelite*, 8/3/1877, 4.

while rendering religious practice mobile and resolutely American. Iowa's Jewish communities were in many ways created—individually and collectively—by their participation in the Jewish press. American Judaism as it came to be institutionally organized and ideologically conceived was also a product of the press and its negotiation of the diverse American settings—like Iowa—where Jewish life was emerging.

IN 1856 Wise reflected on his visits in Iowa and elsewhere in the West.

I am convinced that Judaism will not be forgotten in this country. Wherever the sons and daughters of Israel have made their home they remember the religion of their fathers and attempt to establish congregations. . . . Wherever Jewish families live, attempts are made to live according to Jewish laws and usages, and those who, by the force of circumstances, cannot do so, confess invariably, they are obliged to act contrary to their desire, and entertain the hope of being soon enabled, to live again in the pale of Israel's religion.<sup>81</sup>

Two decades later, in his *Reminiscences*, Wise remembered the trip differently: "I spent happy days in the Mississippi towns; the people anticipated my every wish. I saw everything, and became acquainted with every one; but withal I longed to get back into the territory of Jewish civilization."<sup>82</sup> Wise was both skeptical and hopeful of the prospects for Jewish life outside of major urban centers. He had created bonds with local Jews, and even though he perceived a qualitative difference between Jewish life in Iowa and in more populous Jewish locales, where it was easier to facilitate traditional observances, at the time he presented their struggles as ultimately conquerable and as intertwined with those of the nation. Jews could remain faithful and true in any place, and if Jewish life could persist in Iowa, it could persist anywhere.

The same year that Wise wrote his *Reminiscences*, a Jew from Burlington sought his authoritative opinion on a local matter,

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81. *Israelite*, 8/1/1856, 29.

82. Isaac Mayer Wise, *Reminiscences* (Cincinnati, 1901), 297. The *Reminiscences* were originally published in Wise's German-language newspaper, *Die Deborah*, in 1874.

because “the leading men tell me they will abide by your decision.”<sup>83</sup> One year later a Burlington correspondent, reporting on developments in the community, wrote, “[It] is not doubtful to me that what I have to report to-day is to some degree due to the influence exercised by the *American Israelite* over American Israelites.”<sup>84</sup> The Jews of Burlington, connected to Wise through his popular newspaper, saw him as both an authority and an inspiration who was deeply important to the life of their community.

These anecdotes, bookending the founding period of Judaism in Iowa and as a nationally organized entity in the United States, point to the central and interactive relationship between Jewish leaders and specific localities. Wise’s ideas and institutions—but also, if less effectively, those of Leeser and others—were formulated in dialogue with and in consideration of Jews in all kinds of places, small and large, throughout the country. At the same time, American Jews rarely lived in a bubble; they constantly interacted with Jews and Jewish leaders in other places. The American Judaism that resulted from that collaboration assumed and delighted in its national scope, while continuing to grapple with issues of unity and diversity, locality and nation, center and periphery. The geographic connections and imaginations that American Jewish publications spearheaded and facilitated created an American Jewish community that, in knowing and understanding itself, made the American continent—and many specific places within it, including Iowa—home.<sup>85</sup>

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83. *American Israelite*, 7/17/1874, 5.

84. *American Israelite*, 10/22/1875, 2.

85. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Thomas A. Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion* (Cambridge, MA, 2006).

# Manuscript Collections: The Cowles Family Publishing Legacy in the Drake Heritage Collections

PATRICIA N. DAWSON

**Editor's note:** *In the late 1970s the Annals of Iowa began a series of articles about manuscript collections of interest to people who care about Iowa history. Those articles ran intermittently until about 1990. We are happy to revive the series with this article about the lives and archival collections of one of Iowa's most noteworthy families – the Cowles family.*

THE COWLES FAMILY COLLECTION, held by Cowles Library, Drake University, includes materials from three branches of the publishing empire that began in Iowa in 1883: the John Cowles Collection, the Gardner Cowles Jr. (Mike) Collection, and the David Kruidenier Jr. Collection. The twenty-plus filing and storage cabinets in Cowles Library Special Collections contain a fascinating and diverse representation of the media world from the 1930s through the 1990s. This collection of papers and artifacts reflects a true family enterprise from a bygone era. This article offers biographical information on the three journalists in addition to the story of the patriarch of the family, Gardner Cowles Sr.<sup>1</sup> A summary description of the contents of the individual collections follows each biography.<sup>2</sup>

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1. I gratefully acknowledge Herb Strentz and Bart Schmidt for their contributions to the biographies.

2. Cowles correspondence is also on file in the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library in West Branch, Iowa, and the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene, Kansas. Correspondence with Wendell Willkie is at the Indiana University Library in Bloomington, Indiana.



**Gardner Cowles Sr., 1861-1946**

No account of the Cowles family publishing legacy would be complete without some discussion of the man who started it all, Gardner Cowles. Born of humble means in the shadow of the Civil War, Gardner built the foundation on which the Cowles media empire would grow and thrive. His story is one of success and influence in business, politics, and publishing. Every corner of the state of Iowa has felt the influence of the man, his publications, or the foundation that continues to bear his name.

Gardner Cowles was born February 28, 1861, in Oskaloosa, Iowa, to William Fletcher Cowles, a Methodist minister, and Maria Elizabeth LaMonte. When Maria married William in 1857, he was already a widower with three children. She gave birth to Gardner in 1861 and to his brother LaMonte two years later. Unfortunately, she died at the age of 35 when Gardner was just 12 years old. Methodist ministers were transferred frequently, so Gardner's family moved every year or two, living in a variety of Iowa towns, including Albia, Eddyville, Grinnell, Knoxville, Mount Pleasant, Muscatine, Oskaloosa, and Ottumwa.

Gardner spent his first year of college at William Penn College in Oskaloosa. He moved to Grinnell for the next two years of his studies before finishing up at Iowa Wesleyan College in Mount Pleasant. He received a bachelor of arts degree from Iowa Wesleyan in 1882 and a master of arts three years later. Gardner's noted frugality came to light during his college years, most famously when he went a whole year wearing the same suit. While at college, Gardner supported himself by working as a teacher. After graduation, he took the position of superintendent of schools in Algona. During his tenure there, he met Florence Call. They married in 1884. During his time as school superintendent, Gardner bought a half-interest in the weekly *Algona Republican*.

In 1884 Gardner left the newspaper and education fields to go into business with his father-in-law, Ambrose Call, a well-known Algona banker. Between 1885 and 1903 Gardner focused on business, capitalizing on Iowa's rapid development. He speculated on land, managed investments, and became involved in banking. By 1900, he had controlling interests in ten different banks in northern Iowa. He also had a strong interest in politics.

Between 1899 and 1903 he served as a Republican member of the Iowa state legislature.

In 1903, when the *Des Moines Register and Leader* came up for sale, Harvey Ingham, who edited the paper and owned a minority investment in it, contacted his old friend Gardner Cowles. Ingham convinced Gardner, who by that time was 42 years old and wealthy, to move to Des Moines and purchase a paper that was \$180,000 in debt and had a circulation of about 14,000. So, in 1904 Gardner, his wife, Florence, and their six children—Helen, Russell, Bertha, Florence, John, and Gardner Jr. (Mike)—relocated from Algona to Des Moines. The Cowles family was in the publishing business.<sup>3</sup>

With Ingham's help, Gardner worked tirelessly to fix the paper's problems. By 1906 he had reduced the company's debt and doubled the paper's circulation. He introduced a variety of innovations early on. In his first year he introduced a color comics section for the Sunday edition. His emphasis on home delivery proved successful and allowed the Sunday edition to be distributed outside of Des Moines. In 1908 Gardner purchased the *Des Moines Evening Tribune*. He renamed his company the Register and Tribune Co. and took on the role of both president and treasurer. Ten years after he had entered the publishing business the *Register* and the *Tribune* were reaching about 55,000 readers, over half of whom were outside of Des Moines. The growth of the *Register* outside of Des Moines was made possible by Iowa's spreading rail network, which allowed the early editions to reach all corners of the state each morning.

As the paper grew, Gardner continued his interest in politics. In 1916 he was an Iowa delegate at the Republican National Convention. His innovations in the newspaper industry continued as the Cowles papers started running public opinion polls created by a young George Gallup. His company was also one of the first newspaper publishers to offer employees group insurance, retirement, and stock purchase plans.

In the 1920s Gardner was able to eliminate his competition in the Des Moines area by purchasing the *Daily News* from the

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3. For a history of the Des Moines Register and Tribune Company, see William B. Friedrichs, *Covering Iowa: The History of the Des Moines Register and Tribune Company, 1849–1985* (Ames, 2000).

Scripps Howard chain in 1924 and buying the *Capital* in 1927. Both of the purchased papers were merged with the afternoon *Tribune*, which was briefly renamed *The Tribune-Capital*. With the Des Moines newspaper market under their complete control, Gardner became chairman of the board of directors of the Register and Tribune Co., with his son Gardner Jr. moving into the position of company president. By that time the papers had grown to be the most influential papers in Iowa, with a combined daily circulation of 350,000 and Sunday circulation of 425,000. By 1928, the Cowles family had expanded into broadcasting, purchasing radio stations in Des Moines, South Dakota, and Washington, D.C.

As Gardner's sons began to take more control over the operation of the family business, he began spending more time golfing, traveling, and playing bridge at the Des Moines Club. He remained busy serving on the boards of trustees at two colleges, a hospital, and several banks. In 1932 President Herbert Hoover appointed him director of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC). He left his post at the RFC in 1933 and returned home to Des Moines. The following year he and his wife founded the Gardner and Florence Call Cowles Foundation. The foundation is a charitable trust set up to support educational and other charitable institutions in Iowa. By that time Gardner was 73 years old. He suffered from vision problems, so most of his reading had to be done by others for him. As he continued to age, his hearing also failed him. In his last years he could not see at all and was unable to hear much. He could still hear well enough to be read to, and family members read to him constantly. He died February 28, 1946, at the age of 85.

As his sons took control of the company in the 1930s, they were able to facilitate major growth in the Cowles publishing empire. They expanded into the Minneapolis market in 1935 with the purchase of the *Minneapolis Star*. Four years later they purchased the *Minneapolis Journal*, merging the two papers into the *Minneapolis Star-Journal*. In 1941 the Cowles family took command of all the major papers in Minneapolis with the purchase of the *Minneapolis Tribune*. In 1937 the Cowles family went on to introduce *LOOK* magazine to the nation, and several other publications followed.



*Herbert Hoover and Gardner Cowles Sr., 1930s. All photographs are courtesy of the Archives at Cowles Library, Drake University, Des Moines, Iowa.*

Gardner Cowles Sr. was a success in many different fields, and his family worked to preserve his reputation in publishing. The publications they founded were not only profitable but were also well run and well known for their journalistic integrity. Fifteen years after Gardner's death, journalism educators rated the finest morning/evening newspaper publishers in America. The Cowles papers in Minneapolis and Des Moines were ranked second and third. The prizes and accolades continued; by 1985, the year the *Register* was sold, it had garnered 13 Pulitzer Prizes—second only to the *New York Times*.

### **John Cowles, 1898-1983**

"John Cowles was born with an inexhaustible supply of question marks. In his prime . . . [he] interrogated his friends and colleagues about their views on anything and everything—incessantly, incisively and, some thought, annoyingly," said *Minneapolis Star* reporter Peter Ackerberg.<sup>4</sup> *Time* magazine ob-

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4. Peter Ackerberg, "Forever Curious," *Des Moines Tribune*, 6/25/1974.

served in 1935, “No corn-fed bumpkin, no dallying rich-man’s-son, inquisitive John Cowles has stored behind his thick-lenses glasses and his moon face a wealth of essential fact. An excellence of perspective on top of a sound judgment makes him one of the most important young newspaper publishers in the land.”<sup>5</sup> Kenneth MacDonald, who served more than 50 years at the *Register* and *Tribune* as an editor and publisher, attributed the inquisitive nature of both John and Gardner Cowles Jr. (Mike) to their parents. MacDonald said that he never met a more perceptive or more persistent question-asker than Gardner Cowles Sr. At the dinner table, on the road, in the office, at bedtime, and at breakfast, question-asking came naturally to the Cowles boys.

Born in Algona, Iowa, December 14, 1898, John Cowles was not quite 5 when the family bought an interest in the *Des Moines Register* and moved to their new home. John was the fifth of six Cowles children, to be followed in four years by the youngest, his brother Mike. John attended Des Moines schools before enrolling in the Phillips Exeter Academy, Exeter, New Hampshire, where he graduated cum laude in 1917.

Even with interrupting his studies at Harvard University for a brief training stint in the U.S. Army, he still graduated from Harvard with honors in 1920 and had the distinction of being the first undergraduate to serve simultaneously as an editor of the *Crimson*, the *Lampoon*, and the *Advocate*—the student newspaper, humor magazine, and literary magazine.

Fresh from Harvard, John joined the *Register* and *Tribune* as a reporter, covering the Iowa legislature in 1921—his first extended exposure to politics. Only a year later, he organized the Register and Tribune Syndicate, which offered news and features for sale to other newspapers around the nation. That was a somewhat audacious move, since it was a bid to be one of the few successful news syndicates outside New York and Chicago. At its peak, the syndicate offered 60 to 75 features—including such comics and cartoons as “The Family Circus” and “Spider-man” and commentaries by David Horowitz, Stanley Karnow, political cartoonist Herbert Block (“Herblock”), and others. “The Family Circus” was the most successful item, sold to more than

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5. “Iowa Formula,” *Time*, 7/1/1935, 26.

1,000 newspapers. The syndicate was sold to Hearst and the King Features Syndicate in 1986 for \$4.3 million.

John became vice-president, general manager, and associate publisher of the Register and Tribune Company in 1923. That same year he married Elizabeth Morley Bates of Oswego, New York, who was to become a significant community leader in Iowa and Minnesota in her own right, in addition to helping to shape John's political views and policies.

From the mid-1920s to the mid-1930s, John and Mike Cowles—who joined the Des Moines papers in 1925—built a record of growth and newspaper innovation that was envied in board rooms and newsrooms around the nation. With their father they were pioneers in newspaper graphics and photojournalism, public opinion polling, building circulation revenue, and developing a reputation for newsroom independence and public service.

In 1935 the Cowles family branched out to Minneapolis. The short version of the story is that the Cowleses looked around for an opportunity to duplicate the success they had enjoyed in Des Moines and in Iowa. In Minneapolis they bought the *Star*, which had the lowest circulation of the city's three papers—just the situation the *Register* had been in when Harvey Ingham and Gardner Cowles Sr. bought it in 1903. So, John and Elizabeth Cowles and their four children moved to Minneapolis. Within six years, the Cowleses had built a morning, evening, and Sunday monopoly situation, just as they had in Des Moines by 1927.

The fortunes of the *Star* were turned around, thanks to strong news coverage and aggressive salesmanship by John Cowles, who dealt with advertisers on a one-on-one basis. A counting-house mentality made some newspapers timid, but the *Star* attracted and held advertisers and readers as it developed a reputation as the local newspaper that would not yield to advertising pressures or to covering up news. As John summed up his philosophy, reflected in many of his speeches and writings, "Our formula was simply this. Give readers a superior product, deliver it better and promote it effectively." At the dedication of the new Minneapolis Star and Tribune building in 1949, he elaborated, "The primary obligation of a newspaper is to give its readers the news, all the news, without bias or slant or distor-

tion or suppression in the news columns. We believe that only on our editorial pages should our own opinions be expressed.”<sup>6</sup>

When the Cowleses purchased the *Star* in 1935, its circulation was listed at 79,000. With the purchase of the evening and Sunday *Journal* in August 1939, the combined evening *Star-Journal* had a circulation of 240,000. Beginning in 1940, it also had a new building, one that *Editor and Publisher* in 1943 called “the finest newspaper plant between Chicago and the West Coast.”<sup>7</sup> Another giant step was announced May 1, 1941: all Minneapolis newspapers were realigned under the Cowles family’s command when the *Star-Journal* purchased the morning and Sunday *Tribune*. The *Times*, which had taken the place of the afternoon *Tribune*, also was controlled by the Cowles family. The purchases reflected another aspect of John’s philosophy.

I am convinced that where newspapers have combined or suspended and single ownership newspaper cities or fields have evolved, the resulting product has, in almost every instance, been much superior to the newspapers that preceded it.

I say flatly that with only a small number of exceptions the best newspapers in America are those which do not have a newspaper competing with them in their local field. By best I mean the most responsibly edited, the fairest, the most complete, the most accurate, the best written and the most objective.<sup>8</sup>

The *Star* reached a peak circulation of almost 300,000 in the early 1960s. The *Tribune* grew from its 1941 circulation of 61,000 daily and 200,000 Sunday to more than 240,000 daily and 600,000 Sunday. The *Tribune* and the *Star* were merged into one publication in early 1982.<sup>9</sup>

John Cowles was also a key player in some of the journalism industry’s professional and business associations. In 1929 he was elected a vice-president of the Associated Press (AP) news-gathering cooperative, and he served as an AP director

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6. “Cowles Boys Made Amazing 6-Year Record in Minneapolis,” *Editor and Publisher*, 2/13/1943, 7.

7. Ibid.

8. John Cowles, “The Responsibility of a Free Press in a World in Crisis,” an address at the 43rd Annual Journalism Week, *University of Missouri Bulletin* 52, no. 33, Journalism Series no. 124, 7.

9. Obituary of John Cowles, *Star and Tribune*, 2/26/1983.



from 1934 to 1943. He was a director of the Audit Bureau of Circulation from 1929 to 1933. His 1956 honorary doctorate from Harvard, one of ten he received, recognized him as “a journalist with a public conscience.”<sup>10</sup> That same year he received the Minnesota Award from the University of Minnesota for distinguished service in journalism.

A prolific writer and world traveler, John often returned from his journeys to produce a series of articles offering insights into developments in Russia, Asia, Europe, England, and South America. A sampling of his essays and commentaries suggests that many of his insights have held up well. Consider, for example, his 1951 comments at the advent of the television age, a good 40 years before talk shows and “news discussion” panels (that are usually rhetorical brawls) became a prime component of television news.

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10. His other honorary degrees were from Coe, Simpson, Grinnell, and Drake in Iowa, Macalester in St. Paul, Jamestown in North Dakota, Boston College, the University of Rochester in New York, and Allegheny College in Pennsylvania.



There is considerable reason to believe, I think, that television, when its facilities become nationwide, when telecasts are in color, and when the number of receiving sets has doubled, will become the nation's single most powerful instrument for the mass transmission of ideas and entertainment. . . .

Because of its powerful impact, television may tend to make the maintenance of our free society more difficult. Badly informed, emotionally adolescent TV viewers may tend to adopt hysterically extreme views on complicated political and economic issues concerning which they know, and would otherwise care, little. . . . Television may be the greatest potential agency for adult education we have, but there is a grave danger that it will develop in a pattern where it will not serve the public welfare as it might.<sup>11</sup>

The comment about television hints at the link between John's newspaper career and his involvement in politics and service in the administrations of five presidents: Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson. His speeches and articles often consider the newspaper to be a classroom, an educational institution, for citizens; he also likened the role of the publisher to that of the nonpartisan government servant. Cowles expanded on this thought, as it regards newspaper publishers, in a letter in 1963 to J. Edward Gerald.

I have never had any interest in personal participation in party politics, and I think any newspaper is seriously injured if its head does involve himself in partisan politics. I worked for [Wendell] Willkie's nomination only because I thought it was an extremely critical time for the country and that it might be fatal if an isolationist who would not build up the country's military capabilities were elected. When a newspaper editor or publisher accepts any important political appointment, the Administration assumes that his publication will automatically editorially support it. In two administrations I had been asked if I would accept an ambassadorship or other high federal office, but unhesitatingly declined. A newspaperman who accepts such an office loses not only his own independence, but that of his publication as well. This does not mean, however, that I think newspaper executives should not be willing to take temporary non-partisan appointments if they think their services may be in the public interest. For example, F.D.R.

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11. Cowles, "Responsibility of a Free Press."

asked me to serve on the Foreign Bondholders Protective Council, which was to advise the government and the bond owners as to what, if anything, should be done about all of the foreign bonds sold in this country that had gone into default. President Truman asked me, I assume at the suggestion of, or certainly with the advance approval of, Herbert Hoover to serve on the subcommittee of the Hoover Commission which was devoted to proposed changes in our military establishment. This was an important assignment and indirectly resulted in some basic improvements in our defense setup. Truman also appointed me to the White House Conference on Public Education. Eisenhower made me a part-time consultant to the National Security Council shortly after he took office. President Kennedy appointed me to the General Advisory Committee of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. . . . I know of no reason why newspaper editors or publishers should not take temporary, non-partisan jobs of these kinds.<sup>12</sup>

The most significant recognition Cowles received for such national service was the Medal of Merit, the highest U.S. government decoration for civilians for war service. He received it from President Truman in 1947 for his service in Washington, North Africa, and England in 1943 as a special assistant to the Lend-Lease administrator, E. R. Stettinius Jr.

John's philosophy of public service applied, too, to private organizations and foundations. Perhaps the position he prized most was his role as a director of the Ford Foundation, to which he was appointed in 1950. His views on world affairs, he said, were greatly influenced by Paul Hoffman, the Ford Foundation president and former director of the Marshall Plan. Some of John's international travels were on behalf of the Ford Foundation. John also cited his education at Harvard and editor Harvey Ingham as being influential in shaping his political and social views.

Another important influence on John's life and career was his wife of 53 years, Elizabeth, who died in 1976. In the 1930s she was a founder of the Maternal Health League (which later became Planned Parenthood) in Iowa. She was primarily re-

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12. Folder of material gathered by J. Edward Gerald from interviews with John Cowles regarding his life and career, mostly notes from 1961-1963, drawer 4, cabinet 23, John Cowles Collection, Cowles Library, Drake University, Des Moines.

sponsible for the opening of the state's first birth control clinic in 1935. She continued her Planned Parenthood work in Minneapolis, along with memberships in the American Civil Liberties Union, the League of Women Voters, and other civic organizations. She was a charter member of the United Negro College Fund and a lifetime member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

In a 1974 profile by Peter Ackerberg, John said that he by then regarded himself as "an independent with Democratic leanings." "As I've learned more," he added, "I've become more liberal." Partly responsible for that "learning," John said, was Elizabeth Cowles.<sup>13</sup> The couple was also a strong supporter of the arts in Minneapolis and Des Moines. They had two daughters (Morley Cowles Ballantine of Durango, Colorado, and Sara Cowles Doering of Cambridge, Massachusetts), two sons (John Cowles Jr. of Minneapolis and Russell Cowles of Minneapolis), and 16 grandchildren.

John's service to private corporations and foundations and universities included being a trustee or director of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the American Assembly, the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts, the Minneapolis Foundation, General Mills, General Electric Co., Equitable Life Insurance of Iowa, the Gardner and Florence Call Cowles Foundation, Harvard University, Phillips Exeter Academy, Carleton College, and Drake University.

John was chairman of the board of the Des Moines Register and Tribune Company from 1945 to 1970. He was president of the Minneapolis Star and Tribune Company and predecessor companies from 1935 to 1968 and chairman from 1968 to 1973.

THE JOHN COWLES COLLECTION includes 16 filing cabinets of papers and other memorabilia and framed documents and photographs. The material is organized and cataloged in such a way as to preserve as much as possible the original placement of papers in John's files. If the placement of an item seems strange to the researcher, it is probably where it is because John Cowles caused it to be there. The following general areas are listed in the order of their filing in the file cabinets:

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13. Ackerberg, "Forever Curious."

**Speeches:** These files include speeches made by John Cowles, correspondence relating to the speeches, and material he kept for reference when writing speeches, organized by date where relevant.

**Family:** These files include correspondence with family members, family business matters, art, insurance, philanthropy, estate business of both John and Elizabeth Bates Cowles and other family members, foundation matters, investments, and trusts.

**Special Areas:** Papers relating to Phillips Exeter Academy, the Ford Foundation, General Mills, Harvard University, the *Des Moines Register*, *Look* magazine and Cowles Communication, Inc.

**Public Life:** These papers are organized chronologically, with the years up to 1955 being mostly a year-by-year set of files. After 1955, the files are alphabetical by subject with a range of dates given for each file. This organization is the way the material was originally found.

**Artifacts:** This category includes material that either did not arrive at the library in a file folder or did not lend itself to storage in a file folder. Included are rolled documents, academic hoods, scrapbooks, photographs, and published materials.

The online index lists the number of the filing cabinet and the number of the drawer.

### **Gardner Cowles Jr. (Mike), 1903–1985**

Judging from his life, no one ever told Gardner Cowles Jr. (Mike) that being a newspaper editor and publisher should not be fun. Mike Cowles asked so many questions, told so many stories, and exhibited such a *joie de vivre* that any observer could see his enthusiasm for his career. Here was a person loyal to family traditions in responsible, public-spirited, and innovative journalism. But Mike was also a person who enjoyed working with a young George Gallup to determine reader interests, was a pioneer in photojournalism, mingled with celebrities, took the measure of the movers and shakers of his time, and still had the whimsy to own for a few years the Cardiff Giant—the gypsum carved giant created for a successful 1869 hoax.

Mike Cowles and the Cowles family brought to American newspaper journalism a tradition of innovation, newsroom independence, and community service that typically are part of the definition of the family-owned, regional newspapers of an



Gardner Cowles Jr. (Mike), 1950s.

almost bygone era in journalism history. As noted by *Fortune* magazine in 1950, "There is nothing in the Cowles' record to indicate that the family ever lusted after power or profits. They were a dyed-in-the-wool newspaper family with an urge, above all, to produce a paper that would honor their craft."<sup>14</sup>

Mike Cowles was born on January 31 of the year of the *Register* purchase and died in 1985, just one week after the *Register* was sold to Gannett Co. Inc. after 82 years of Cowles family ownership. He was the third son and last of six children of Gardner Cowles and the former Florence Call. His older brothers were Russell, who became a well-known painter and muralist, and John, his compatriot in many publishing ventures; his three sisters were Helen Cowles LeCron, Florence Cowles Kruidenier, and Bertha Cowles Quarton. In his memoir, *Mike Looks Back*, he

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14. George Mills, *Harvey Ingham & Gardner Cowles, Sr.: Things Don't Just Happen* (Ames, 1977), 87.

explains his nickname: Although named Gardner Jr., he carried the name of Mike ever since he was a day or two old, he said, after his father “took a good look at me and announced ‘He looks like an Irishman. Let’s call him Mike.’”<sup>15</sup> (Mike kept that family practice alive by dubbing his son Gardner Cowles III “Pat”).

Mike attended public schools in the city and, when he was 15, went to Phillips Exeter Academy in Exeter, New Hampshire, with the expectation that Harvard would come next—as he followed in the footsteps of his brother John. At Exeter, Mike was editor of the weekly paper, the *Exonian*. At Harvard, from which he graduated in 1925, he was the editor and president of the student daily newspaper, the *Crimson*.

When he joined the *Des Moines Tribune* soon after graduation and then switched to the *Register*, he was on familiar ground. Almost as far back as he could remember he had been at the papers. When he was 8, his father paid him 25 cents for each editorial he proofread, and while at Harvard he had worked summers as a *Register* reporter.

One of his first assignments as a full-time reporter was covering the legislature and the *Register’s* campaign to “get Iowa out of the mud.” In 1920 the state had about 25 miles of paved highways; by 1930, the paved mileage was 3,272—the precision of the measure was attested to by a map kept outside Gardner Cowles’s office on which each new paved mile was colored in crayon. The paved roads not only got Iowa out of the mud but also worked well with Gardner Sr.’s efforts to circulate the *Register* throughout Iowa.

Mike said that his mother was the greatest influence on his life, through her liberal social views, humor, and soft-spoken nature. He and his brother John learned the newspaper business well from their father, but much of the influence on Mike as an editor came from Harvey Ingham. Ingham was who Mike said he had in mind when in 1955 he spoke about what makes a great editor: “The greatest editors I know are just like the greatest educators and are successful for the same reason. They are thoughtful men with scrupulous regard for the truth. They are men who strive to stir the best in the human race, not pander to the worst.

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15. Mike Cowles, *Mike Looks Back* (New York, 1985), 7.

They are men who dare to lead, even when the direction is temporarily dangerous and unpopular.”<sup>16</sup> Mike had sounded a similar theme several years before, in a 1949 comment.

The only answer to ignorance is education and more education. And I mean more than just the formal education in more and better schools, colleges and universities. I mean more adult education, more public forums, more discussion groups. But above everything else, I mean better newspaper and magazine editing, better news and discussion and debate programs on the radio. And I mean the use of the powerful new medium of television to make people understand and think.<sup>17</sup>

His concept of education mirrored a personal ethic of learning that was built on meeting people and asking questions. Friends would invariably speak of his insatiable curiosity that would elicit information from people and a gregarious nature that relished meeting new people and sharing ideas and stories. His most noted questioning episode came in 1959 when he irritated Russian leader Nikita Khrushchev by persisting in a question about freedom of expression in Russia. Speaking at the Economic Club of New York, Khrushchev had called for Americans and Russians to become better acquainted. “That being your feeling,” Cowles asked, “why do you insist on censoring the dispatches of American correspondents in the Soviet Union?”<sup>18</sup>

In the late 1920s and the early 1930s, Mike had moved through various newsroom executive positions, apparently informally and fast enough so that his own recollections and newspaper records simply list the positions as being held in succeeding years as city editor, news editor, associate managing editor, managing editor, executive editor, and associate publisher. He listed the title of publisher, too, along the way. What is clear is that he was *Register* and *Tribune* president from 1943 to 1971 and chairman of the board from 1971 to 1973.

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16. Mills, *Ingham & Cowles*, 112.

17. Mike Cowles, “Freedom & Responsibility,” speech at the Des Moines Register and Tribune centennial banquet, Des Moines, June 20, 1949, Gardner Cowles Jr. (Mike) Collection, Cowles Library, Drake University, Des Moines.

18. Mills, *Ingham & Cowles*, 111.

His innovations and impact on journalism were more important than the publishing titles he carried. His father, who would be publisher until his death at 85 in 1946, gave him some latitude. In fact, some credit Mike and John with more than doubling *Register* and *Tribune* circulation in the 1920s from 110,000 to 243,000 daily for the two papers and from 86,000 to 206,000 on Sunday. Under Mike's leadership, the Sunday *Register's* circulation rose from 168,271 in 1928 to 376,372 in 1941.

In the late 1920s Mike, then about 25, teamed up with a doctoral student from the University of Iowa, George Gallup, then about 27. Gallup, who was teaching at Drake University at the time, conducted some of the nation's first readership studies for the *Register* and *Tribune*. What he and Mike found confirmed Mike's interest in photojournalism. Gallup showed that any use of graphics would increase readership of a news item and that readers preferred a series of photos on a related subject to photos on different topics. Based on that research and his own passion for pictures, Mike greatly expanded the use of photos in the *Register* and *Tribune* and pointed with pride to a finding that in one six-day period the *Tribune* carried more photographs than any other leading newspaper in the nation. He credited the Sunday *Register's* rotogravure section with helping get the newspapers through the Depression.

Despite the lean economic times of the 1930s and the fact that the papers were barely breaking even, Mike chose Richard Wilson, then 28 and the *Register's* city editor, to open a *Register* and *Tribune* news bureau in Washington, D.C., in 1933. An editorial noted that such a Washington outpost was needed because "it is the obligation of these papers to the state to give such news service from every quarter . . . and that applies with particular force to Washington news with an Iowa slant."<sup>19</sup> That philosophy was consistent with the paper's slogan that it was "The Newspaper Iowa Depends Upon." It also was consistent with the nature of the family-owned, privately held newspaper to have priorities other than the bottom line. Over the years, Washington bureau reporters won five Pulitzer Prizes for the *Register*, including one by Wilson in 1954.

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19. Ibid., 144.



Mike combined two of his passions—photography and aviation—with the development of aerial photography. The *Register*, beginning as early as 1928, had its own airplane, named the *Good News* after a reader contest. The aerial photography combined with a “machine-gun” camera—developed by photographers George Yates and Charles Gatschet in 1935 for rapid-fire exposures—made the *Register* and *Tribune* national leaders in photojournalism. The availability of the *Good News* improved *Register* and *Tribune* news coverage of the region, especially on fast-breaking stories. Mike also increased sports coverage in the papers and, thanks to Yates’s camera, provided sports page readers with an early day version of instant-replay as key plays in football games were pictured in detail across the sports section.<sup>20</sup> The aerial photography in the *Register* was developed to its fullest extent under Don Ultang, a pilot and photographer for the paper from 1946 to 1958.

Recognizing the onset of the age of aviation, Cowles urged airport development in Des Moines. In 1936 he spent his own money to ensure that land would be available for airport expansion in Des Moines when the city had the public authorization and the money to do so. The 160 acres that he purchased for \$70,000 was transferred to city ownership at cost. His leadership in airport development continued into the 1940s.

In 1938 John moved to Minneapolis to take over as a full-time resident publisher while Mike stayed in Des Moines to, in his words, “look after *The Register and Tribune* and to develop my plans for *LOOK* magazine.”<sup>21</sup> Based on responses to the photo coverage in their newspapers and the sale of photo features to other newspapers, Mike decided in 1936 to start a national picture magazine to be called *LOOK*, a name suggested by his mother. Upon hearing that *Time* and Henry Luce had similar plans for a magazine to be named *LIFE*, the Cowles brothers met with Luce and Roy Larsen of *Time* to compare

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20. One such series of photographs ignited a nationwide controversy about the treatment of African American college football players and earned Don Ultang and John Robinson a Pulitzer Prize. See S Zebulon Baker, “‘This affair is about something bigger than John Bright’: Iowans Confront the Jim Crow South, 1946–1951,” *Annals of Iowa* 72 (2013), 122–31, 139–52.

21. Mike Cowles, *Mike Looks Back*, 41.



*Mike and John Cowles, mid-1930s.*

notes. The plans for *LIFE* to be a weekly with a news orientation while *LOOK* was intended to be a feature-oriented monthly magazine were different enough that the brothers thought there was room in the market for both. They decided to see how *LIFE* fared before entering the magazine field, which they did a year later, with the first issue of *LOOK* published January 5, 1937.

Meanwhile, both the Minneapolis and Des Moines newspapers continued to emphasize newsroom independence from advertising and political pressures. In Minneapolis, soon after the Cowleses assumed ownership of the *Star*, the business community was upset when the *Star* refused to join its two competitors in ignoring the news about a well-known executive arrested for violating hunting laws. In Des Moines the papers from time to time suffered economically from advertising boycotts in protest of news coverage.

In part, the Cowles brothers argued that monopoly ownership such as they enjoyed in both cities — after 1927 in Des Moines and after 1941 in Minneapolis — enabled them to resist pressures to sensationalize or censor the news. But resistance to advertising, personal, and political pressures — including those of the railroad

and liquor interests—had been established early in the leadership of the senior Cowles and Harvey Ingham. In 1915 Ingham had written,

Two avenues of popularity are open to the newspaper. The first is to yield to flatter, to cajole. The second is to stand for the right things unflinchingly and win respect. . . . A strong and fearless newspaper will have readers and a newspaper that has readers will have advertisements. That is the only newspaper formula worth working to. . . . After making all allowances the only newspaper popularity that counts in the long run is bottomed on public respect.<sup>22</sup>

In family-owned newspapers, newsroom and family traditions were intertwined. David Kruidenier, the son of Florence Cowles Kruidenier who in 1971 succeeded Mike as president of the Register and Tribune Company, said that newsroom independence “is bred into one. I come off this heritage.”<sup>23</sup>

Such lessons found believers in the newsroom, too. In a rare instance in which the senior Cowles might suggest that a story be played inside the paper instead of on page one, the newsroom had the confidence that it could play the story on page one and not hear a word about it. Newsroom independence was based on the confidence that the Cowles family had in its editors and staff so as not to second guess them or to risk losing them. Kenneth MacDonald, himself a newsroom leader as editor and publisher during his 50 years with the Register and Tribune Company, thought that one root of the newsroom independence stemmed from Gardner Cowles’s respect for Jay (“Ding”) Darling, the *Register*’s cartoonist from 1906 to 1949, except for a brief fling in New York, 1911–1913. Politically, Darling was far more conservative than Ingham, and Cowles devoted considerable time to keeping peace between them. To bridle Darling might mean losing him. So Darling was an independent cartoonist who contributed Pulitzer Prizes to the *Register* in 1924 and 1943.

Mike Cowles continued the tradition of newsroom independence, relying on editors like Ken MacDonald and editorial

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22. Ibid.

23. Quoted in Mills, *Ingham & Cowles*, 40.

page editors like Bill Waymack, Forrest Seymour, and Lauren Soth—all Pulitzer Prize winners (1938, 1943, and 1956)—to set the newspaper's agenda. At a dinner marking MacDonald's retirement in 1977, Mike shocked those editors and longtime staffers present by noting that he never did agree with the *Register's* editorial policies on agriculture and then spelled out what he thought the policy should be. Some of those present thought that maybe Mike was overstating his disagreement—but the point was made: a paper could, perhaps should, have editorial stands different from its publisher's. That point was made, too, when, as editorial page editor of the papers in the 1970s and early 1980s, Gilbert Cranberg opposed a downtown business development plan supported in part by then publisher David Kruidenier. To Des Moines business interests such policies were puzzling; to the Cowles family it was the way to run a good newspaper.

Not that Mike and John Cowles were political wallflowers or uninvolved in their communities. Their fascination with politics included a belief that it was their duty as citizens to be involved. Their strong support for Wendell Willkie's presidential candidacy in 1940 was so public and so impassioned that on a swing of Willkie's through Minneapolis and Des Moines, the news coverage in the Cowles papers was almost fawning. A review of correspondence and the news coverage suggests that the favorable coverage was not a result of the overt direction of either of the Cowles brothers, but because the reporters perceived that Willkie was the bosses' candidate. Correspondence between Mike and Willkie suggests that Mike did wield a heavy hand, however, in *LOOK* magazine, giving Willkie a strong boost.

The Cowles brothers were intimate advisers of Willkie during his drive for the GOP nomination and his campaign against President Roosevelt. They remained so after the election. The brothers hoped to lay the groundwork for another Willkie bid in 1944—an effort with little hope of fruition at the outset and no hope ultimately because of GOP disaffection with the liberal Willkie and then an illness that incapacitated Willkie in mid-1944 and led to his death that October. The largest single memorial to Willkie was a gift of \$125,000 from the Gardner Cowles and Florence Call Cowles Foundation to establish Willkie House,



*Wendell Willkie, John Cowles, and an unidentified man, ca. 1940.*

an African American community center in Des Moines, a memorial that reflected both Willkie's and the Cowleses' concerns with civil rights and race relations.

The links between the brothers and Willkie had been forged even stronger after the 1940 campaign. John accompanied Willkie to England in January 1941 on a bipartisan journey requested by President Roosevelt. FDR wanted to rally congressional support for the U.S. Lend Lease program to provide the Royal Navy with more ships in its war against Nazi Germany. Willkie's testimony before Congress helped ensure congressional approval of Lend Lease. Almost two years later, Mike accompanied Willkie on his 49-day "One World" tour—a trip again supported by Roosevelt to assure U.S. allies of strong bipartisan support in the United States for the war effort. Mike was in the small Willkie party that carried the unity theme to Allied leaders in Africa, the Middle East, Russia, and China from late August to mid-October. Mike called the trip the highlight of his life.

The "One World" journey came soon after Mike had been appointed to wartime duty as assistant director of the Office of

War Information (OWI). His responsibilities in the OWI were to direct a domestic news bureau, coordinating information from non-military government agencies. Mike took the job in response to a short request from President Roosevelt, a note that said, "Dear Cowles, Please do! FDR." Cowles served in the OWI for about a year under the leadership of Elmer Davis.

Mike's interest in international issues and in aviation led to occasional around-the-world tours and frequent trips to Europe — one of which included a trip home aboard the airship *Hindenburg* a year before its explosion on May 7, 1937, in Lakehurst, New Jersey. But, as with the Willkie trips, there was little news coverage in the Cowles papers about such journeys. As a matter of newspaper policy and what they saw as journalistic decorum, the Cowles family shunned news that might be viewed as self-promotion. The *Register* and *Tribune* did cover Mike's speeches to community business and educational groups when he spoke about political trends.

In the post-World War II years, Mike's business and personal interests moved him to New York, fulfilling a boyhood dream, he said, that began when on his first trip to the city as a boy of 12, his father gave him five dollars and turned him loose on the city and Coney Island. Mike navigated the subway system and the rides at Coney Island all day, returning back to the hotel and a relieved mother in the early evening. In New York, he directed *LOOK* and undertook other publishing and broadcasting ventures while maintaining his leadership at the *Register* and *Tribune*.

Mike and John talked on the telephone two or three times per week to keep watch over the Cowles holdings, although their newspapers were separate operations. By the mid-1950s, the Sunday circulations of their Des Moines and Minneapolis newspapers totaled well over a million, covering Iowa and Minnesota and circulating into neighboring states. The *Register's* peak Sunday circulation was about 550,000, and the paper circulated in each of the state's 99 counties.

*LOOK* had also been a success, and the publication had been moved to twice per month. The publication reached a peak circulation of about 9 million before falling to television, higher postal costs, and other forces that spelled the end of the mass

circulation magazine. The most difficult day of his life, Mike later said, was September 16, 1971, when it was announced that *LOOK* would cease publication on October 19, 1971.

Mike's other magazine ventures included *Quick*, a pocket-sized weekly news magazine, which was started in 1949 and suspended in 1953, when it had reached a circulation of 1.3 million. Although the smaller size was not attractive to some advertisers, the main reason *Quick* was killed was that its subscribers—if transferred to *LOOK*—would help *LOOK* maintain an important subscription edge in a critical circulation battle with *Collier's*. *Flair*, a magazine pressed upon Mike by his third wife, Fleur Fenton, had so many special design elements that, although interesting, it lost about 75 cents per copy and was suspended one year after its debut in January 1950. *Venture*, a travel magazine published from 1963 to 1967, featured a three-dimensional photograph on each month's cover.

On the newspaper front, seeing the opportunity for a daily newspaper serving Long Island, Mike started the *Suffolk Sun* on November 21, 1966. The *Sun* survived for only three years, with publication suspended October 18, 1969. A longer-lasting venture was the *San Juan* (Puerto Rico) *Star*, established November 2, 1959, and sold to Scripps Howard August 12, 1970. The *Des Moines Tribune* was among the afternoon newspapers falling almost like dominoes in the early 1980s; its last issue was September 25, 1982. Similarly, in the frenzy of newspaper buying in those years, a bidding war for the *Des Moines Register* resulted in the sale to Gannett in 1985 for about \$200 million, leaving the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune* as the Cowleses' primary presence in the Midwest. The publisher of the *Register* under Gannett was Charles Edwards, a nephew of David Kruidenier, the fourth generation of the Cowles family to head the paper, but the first to do so without family ownership.

Mike held honorary degrees from 11 colleges and universities, including seven in Iowa: Coe, Cornell, Drake, Grinnell, Iowa Wesleyan, Morningside, and Simpson. Others were from Bard College, Mundelein, Long Island University, and Hobart and William Smith Colleges. In 1950 he was the chief marshal of the Harvard commencement. He served on the Columbia University Advisory Board on Pulitzer Prizes and the boards of directors

of R. H. Macy and Company, the New York Times Co., United Air Lines, UAL Inc., Kemperco Inc., Bankers Life Company, First National Bank of Miami, and the American Society of Newspaper Editors, the Magazine Publishers Association, and the National Association of Broadcasters.

Mike was married four times. His first marriage was to Helen Curtiss. They wed in November 1926 and divorced in May 1930. His marriage to Lois Thornburg (May 1933–August 1946) resulted in four children: Lois Cowles Harrison, Gardner III (Pat), Kate Cowles Nichols, and Jane Cowles. The third marriage was to Fleur Fenton (December 1946–November 1955). He was married to Jan Hochstraser (also known as Jan Streate Cox) from May 1956 until his death; with her he had a daughter, Virginia, and a stepson, Charles.

Newspapers, including Cowles family holdings, owned during his life were the *Des Moines Register* (1903–1985); *Des Moines Tribune* (1908–1982); *Minneapolis Star* (1935–1982); *Minneapolis Tribune* (1941–1982); *Minneapolis Star-Tribune* (1982–1985); *San Juan (Puerto Rico) Star* (1959–1970); *Gainesville (Florida) Sun* (1962–1971); *Lakeland (Florida) Ledger* (1963–1971); *Rapid City (South Dakota) Journal* (1964–1990); *Great Falls (Montana) Tribune* (1965–1990); *Suffolk (Long Island, N.Y.) Sun* (1966–1969); *Palatka (Florida) Daily News* (1969–1971); *Leesburg (Florida) Daily Commercial* (1969–1971); *Jackson (Tennessee) Sun* (1972–1985); and *Waukesha (Wisconsin) Freeman* (1978–1983).

THE GARDNER COWLES JR. (MIKE) COLLECTION covers the years approximately from 1942 to 1975. The papers consist mainly of correspondence, speeches, and material related to the business of publishing. In organizing these papers, observing the rule of provenance resulted in some like material being filed in two different areas—for example, LOOK material both in folders labeled “Look” and in folders labeled “CMI—Cowles Magazines Inc.”

The Mike Cowles Collection is divided into four major categories with an addendum for file drawers 21–26:

Correspondence: filed alphabetically by correspondent and date.

Speeches: filed by date. Mike’s own inventory of his speeches is filed here with additions by the archivist. The folders include correspondence regarding particular speeches if Mike arranged them in that way.



General subjects: the remainder of the papers that could be filed in folders, filed alphabetically by topic and including some large groups of folders on such subjects as *LOOK* magazine and the *San Juan Star*.

Other materials not suited to file folders.

### **David Kruidenier Jr., 1921-2006**

David Kruidenier, grandson of Gardner Cowles Sr., was born in Des Moines on July 18, 1921, to Florence Cowles Kruidenier and David Kruidenier, who operated an automobile dealership that sold Cadillacs, Oldsmobiles, and LaSalles. After attending Des Moines public schools through the ninth grade, Kruidenier graduated from Phillips Exeter Academy and Yale University and received a master's degree in business administration from Harvard University. During World War II, Kruidenier served as an Army Air Force officer in the capacity of navigator aboard bombers in the Pacific. He was credited with 34 missions and was awarded the Air Medal with three clusters and the Distinguished Flying Cross. In December 1948 he married Elizabeth Woodwell Stuart, who later became a Des Moines lawyer and civic activist.

Kruidenier's newspaper career began in 1948, when he trained at the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*. In 1952 he came to the *Des Moines Register and Tribune* as assistant business manager, the beginning of a career spanning 33 years and different positions with the paper. In 1960 he became vice-president and general manager, and in 1971 he was named president, CEO, and publisher of the company. He was also president, CEO, and board chairman of Cowles Media Company.

As *Register* staff writers stated in Kruidenier's obituary in the *Des Moines Register*,

Under Kruidenier's leadership in the 1970s and early 1980s, the *Register* sharpened and deepened its coverage of business, politics and agriculture, and won three of its 15 Pulitzer Prizes. Aggressive coverage of business news caused some criticism of the Des Moines newspapers and of Kruidnier personally from people in the business community who labeled the coverage as negative or anti-business. These critics sometimes went privately to Kruidenier to complain that as top man at the newspaper he should step in and

either direct that certain stories be done or direct that certain stories be withheld from publication. Kruidenier's response was that a newspaper performs best by not being a mouthpiece for any one point of view and that the community is better off when a newspaper talks openly about the strengths and weaknesses of the community.

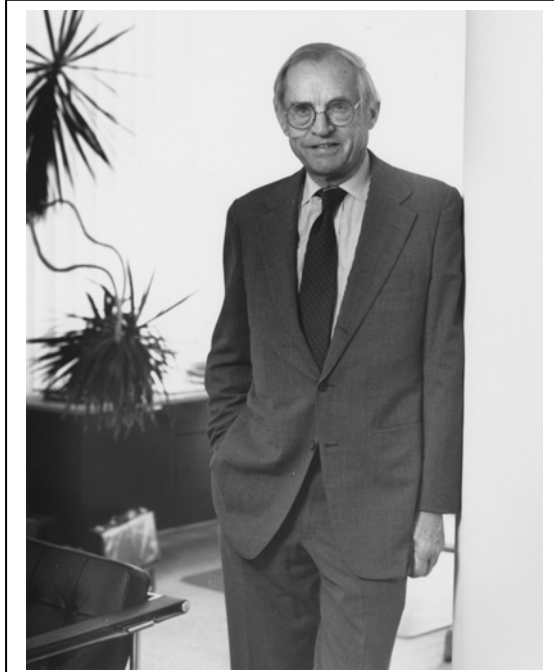
In the same obituary, James P. Gannon, editor of the *Register*, said, "Kruidenier always showed a keen understanding of and appreciation for the need for a vigorous, independent news department. He was a great publisher in supporting the news effort with the needed resources and then leaving it to operate independently. . . . I never saw a single example of any effort on his part to interfere with editors' decisions on handling the news."

In 1985 the *Des Moines Register* was sold to the Gannett Company for about \$200 million. When the stockholders of the company approved the sale on July 1, 1985, Kruidenier noted that the action marked "the ending of a partnership between the Cowles family, Des Moines and the state of Iowa that had lasted 82 years."<sup>24</sup>

Kruidenier was a director of the Audit Bureau of Circulations and of the Newspaper Advertising Bureau. He was a trustee of Grinnell College and a director of Norwest Bank, Des Moines. He was a member of the board of the Menninger Foundation, Midwest Research Institute, and the Walker Art Center. He was known for his long and vital commitment to the metro area, including the Des Moines Civic Center, Nollen Plaza, Simon Estes Amphitheater, Forest Avenue Library, the renovation of Gray's Lake, and the new downtown public library. As his obituary states, "After leading the fund drive that resulted in the construction of the Des Moines Civic Center, Kruidenier served as chairman of its board of directors for a number of years. He was also a trustee of the Des Moines Art Center for years, and his personal art collection was extensive. Kruidenier was a member of the boards at Iowa Methodist Medical Center, Drake University, the Cowles Foundation, the Gardner and Florence Call Cowles Foundation, Des Moines Chamber of Commerce, Greater Des

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24. *Des Moines Register*, 1/10/2006.



*David Kruidenier Jr., 1990.*

Moines Committee, Des Moines Symphony, and the Civic Music Association. He was a member of the Des Moines Club, Wakonda Club, Rotary Club, Iowa Society for Crippled Children and Adults, Junior Achievement, and the Governor's Committee on Mental Health."<sup>25</sup>

David Kruidenier was inducted into the Iowa Business Hall of Fame in 1993 and named one of the state's most influential people in 2000. Other honors include the A. Arthur Davis Award from the Greater Des Moines Leadership Institute, University of Minnesota Distinguished Journalism Award and the Des Moines Philanthropist Award, the 1992 Outstanding Leadership Award from the Des Moines Human Rights Commission, the Des Moines Mid-City Vision Committee Annual Award, and the 1992 Honor Award from the American Library Trustee Association. He received honorary degrees from Buena Vista College (1960), Simp-

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25. Ibid.

son College (1963), Luther College (1990), and Drake University (1990).

THE DAVID KRUIDENIER JR. COLLECTION, housed in three filing cabinets at Cowles Library, includes correspondence, clippings, and other published material and photographs. The material is organized and cataloged in such a way as to preserve as much as possible the original placement of papers in Kruidenier's files. The following general areas are listed in the order of their filing in the file cabinets:

Family: These include files related to the Cowles/Call families, Kruidenier family, correspondence with family members, and history.

#### Correspondence and Speeches

Des Moines Register: This material includes correspondence, reports, minute books, clippings, and much on the sale of the *Des Moines Register* in 1984–85.

Cowles Media Company/Minneapolis Star-Tribune: Included here are annual reports, correspondence, and clippings.

Des Moines City Involvement: Folders here contain aspects of Kruidenier's many civic contributions—public libraries, Civic Center, Gray's Lake, Drake University.

RECENTLY, these three collections, which came to Drake at different times, were reorganized and integrated into a searchable database on the Cowles Library site: <http://cowles-archon.drake.edu/?p=collections/findingaid&id=266&q>. General information about the collection and family can be found at [www.lib.drake.edu/heritage/GardnerCowlesFamily](http://www.lib.drake.edu/heritage/GardnerCowlesFamily).

This huge collection composite, filling over 20 storage cabinets and covering seven to eight decades of American journalism and publishing history, is a significant source for research on that topic as well as political and business history. The John Cowles Papers, in particular his correspondence, are worthy of investigation. John Cowles was an amazing correspondent; his letters to family members and friends such as Dean Acheson and Archibald MacLeish are filled with references to the important topics of the day, including business matters, economics, politics, and domestic and foreign affairs. These letters are an invaluable source for his ideas and opinions. The papers of all

three journalists would be useful for studying trends such as photojournalism, television, and magazine publishing.

The papers, letters, and photos of John Cowles, Gardner Cowles Jr. (Mike), and David Kruidenier Jr. are available for viewing at Drake University's Cowles Library by appointment. For assistance, contact the Cowles Library reference desk for hours and additional information: 515-271-2113 or [claudia.frazer@drake.edu](mailto:claudia.frazer@drake.edu).

## Book Reviews and Notices

*Family Trees: A History of Genealogy in America*, by François Weil. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013. 304 pp. Notes, index. \$27.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Noah Lenstra is a Ph.D. candidate in library and information science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He is the author of “‘Democratizing’ Genealogy and Family Heritage Practices: The View from Urbana, Illinois” in *Encounters with the Past: Heritage and Popular Culture* (forthcoming).

As François Weil, chancellor of the Universities of Paris and past president of the *École des hautes études en sciences sociales*, uses the term, *genealogy* refers both to the science of tracking lineages and to “personal interest in one’s forebears” (2). This overlap of science and individual interest produces what Weil calls cultures of genealogy, which span personal and collective identities. According to Weil, understanding genealogy in historical processes helps historians understand Americans: “Genealogy is arguably the element of contemporary American culture about which we know the least” (2). Rather than offering a focused argument about the meaning of genealogy in America, Weil’s book—designed to appeal to both scholarly and popular audiences—presents a descriptive survey of Americans making genealogy part of their culture.

Before describing and exploring American genealogical cultures, Weil sheds light on the emergence of distinctively American forms of genealogy in the late eighteenth century. As Americans published and circulated their genealogies, they created a democratized genealogical culture oriented more around the free market than around state-based institutions like England’s College of Arms. The independent publication in 1771 by “a middling merchant” in Connecticut of his genealogy represents, for Weil, “a radical departure from colonial and European genealogical cultures” (41). Although genealogy continued to confer status on individuals from prominent families, the cultural practice also increasingly made room for individuals and families outside the elite.

Subsequent chapters explore in more detail how genealogy became American. Chapters two and three focus on antebellum genealogy, with a particular focus on how it oscillated between a concern with the family and a concern with individual status. As concerns

with blood entered genealogy, it became both a scholarly pursuit among individuals obsessed with “stock” (94) and a potential route to fortune among Americans seeking to demonstrate scientifically proven blood ties to rich European families. Chapters four and five focus on genealogy between the Civil War and World War II. There Weil shows how modern ideas of race and commerce shaped genealogy. As genealogy became a nationalistic pursuit pushed by organizations like the Daughters of the American Revolution, a growing number of entrepreneurs found ways to monetize genealogical knowledge. The final chapter surveys American genealogy after World War II. This last chapter, the least empirically rich in the volume, demonstrates how the themes Weil sketched in previous chapters continue to shape and reverberate in contemporary American genealogy.

The role of commerce in shaping American genealogy constitutes one of the book’s principal themes. Weil shows how antebellum New England elites carefully differentiated their family-focused lineages from the emergent mass-market genealogies shaped by entrepreneurs selling blank family registers. Chapter five, titled “Pedigrees and the Market,” represents Weil’s most sustained analysis of this theme. There Weil argues that interlinked processes of scientism, commercialization, and democratization in the late nineteenth century shaped modern forms of American genealogy. In the final chapter, Weil sketches how genetic ancestry testing continues these linked processes.

A second theme showcases how American cultures of genealogy encompass great diversity. Weil argues that American interest in tracing and sharing lineages has always signified many different things. For example, even as genealogy became absorbed into the eugenics movement, it continued, for many, to evoke and embody a private, family-focused culture oriented more around preserving family traditions than around nationalistic concerns with race and blood. African American genealogy represents another source of diversity. Weil characterizes Reconstruction as “a profoundly genealogical moment” (170) when freed slaves sought to use legal records and genealogical techniques to construct families and genealogical identities. In almost every chapter Weil takes pains to explore how African Americans made genealogy theirs throughout American history. Throughout the book Weil uses case studies to showcase the diverse forms through which Americans have done genealogy.

Weil covers a great deal of terrain in this book. In such a broad and comprehensive overview, not all stories can be told. Although Weil suggests that regionalism profoundly shaped American genealogy as it emerged, there is a notable lack of attention to midwestern

genealogical cultures. For example, Weil chronicles how, during the antebellum period, New York City emerged as “the capital of parvenu genealogy” (88), while genealogists in Boston and the broader New England area used genealogy to bolster extant social statuses, not to forge new ones. Unfortunately, similarly close attention to how place-based identities affected genealogical cultures does not inform Weil’s analysis of genealogy in the Midwest (the state of Iowa is not mentioned in the text).

Despite this limitation, the book offers the most comprehensive extant survey of the development of genealogy within American culture. Weil has comprehensively mined the secondary literature on the topic, which helps him synthesize across his archival research in New England and the mid-Atlantic. Historians of many interests and backgrounds will find Weil’s text a useful addition to their libraries. Many more stories need to be told about the history of genealogy in America, but Weil has produced the best one currently available.

*Old Man River: The Mississippi River in North American History*, by Paul Schneider. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2013. xvii, 394 pp. Maps, illustrations, source notes, bibliography, index. \$35.00 hardcover, \$16.99 e-book.

Reviewer Patrick Nunnally coordinates the River Life program at the University of Minnesota’s Institute for Advanced Study.

With hundreds of books in print about the Mississippi River, why do we need another one? Paul Schneider’s entry into this crowded bookshelf is, by turns, personal and researched, focused and rambling, historical for much of its length but contemporary in several of its central concerns, stellar in some of its insights and maddening in some of its errors. Schneider’s title is ambitious, promising a treatment of the continent’s greatest river that contributes to our understanding of the continent’s history. Ultimately, the book, like the river that is its subject, becomes many disparate things at once, leaving readers often wondering just what mad adventure they have undertaken.

Schneider is a journalist, a storyteller who weaves vignettes of his own travels by canoe, kayak, and automobile on the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers through longer, more historically inclined passages. These short set pieces, like the highly engaging voice with which Schneider writes, remind readers that the author has a distinct point of view, that what is being told to us is one perspective.

Besides his trips on the river, and to historic sites such as the Great Serpent Mound, Schneider’s heart seems to be most engaged by the



region bounded by the Great Lakes, the Ohio River, and the Mississippi during the period of French exploration and the fur trade through the population of the region by Americans in the early nineteenth century. He devotes most of the book's attention to this region and era, has researched it more thoroughly, and writes more vividly about historic figures such as La Salle, leaders of the Iroquois Nation, and Henry Shreve. This section, the middle three of the work's seven "books," highlights a broad array of historical figures beyond "great men" yet also draws for much of its insight on the traditional narrative histories such as work by Francis Parkman and the *Jesuit Relations*.

There's a lot to like about Schneider's book. For the most part, he writes well, clearly establishing character, scene, and narrative. He employs some wonderful turns of phrase, closing his section on the Civil War in the Mississippi Valley by noting that Grant's victory at Vicksburg in 1863 closed the book on three centuries of war up and down the Mississippi Valley, but then adding, "The American war against the river, however, had only just begun" (302). That war, with levees, dams, and oil and gas facilities as the battleground and the Army Corps of Engineers as its chief protagonist, carries Schneider's story up into the second decade of the twenty-first century, but is covered in a few relatively short chapters.

While there's much to admire in Schneider's writing, there are also some important problems. Readers with some familiarity with Schneider's subjects will wish in vain for an argument, a thesis, a perspective, or a response to any of the several historical themes and inquiries that the book could take up. A lot more could be said about the valley from the perspective of an environmental or social historian, or someone seriously exploring historical developments of relations between native people and the Europeans and Americans who invaded the region. Schneider's notion that images of steamboats and slaves are "cultural levees" bounding the popular view of the Mississippi's history (263) is extremely interesting and would warrant much further exploration and development. What, for example, might be some of the implications of this limited popular imagination as planners and policymakers decide the future of this great river and its valley? It's unfair to criticize Schneider for not writing the book he didn't intend to write, but a substantive treatment of his putative subject really does call for more analysis than he gives himself scope for.

More troublesome, perhaps, are the places where Schneider simply gets the facts wrong. The U.S.-Dakota War in Minnesota did not last for eight years (190); the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico took place in 2010, not 2009 (314); he dates the Ephraim Squier survey of

ancient mounds in the Ohio Valley in two different years. It may be too much to say that errors of fact (and I could cite more examples) hurt Schneider's credibility, but they are annoying to the careful reader with knowledge of the subject at hand, and they could cause some readers to question other aspects of Schneider's tales.

On balance, there's probably more to like, and more interesting insight to be gained, from Schneider's book than there are fatal flaws. Ultimately, the book offers a great deal to readers interested in the histories of the upper Midwest. The Mississippi River is a central element for the history of Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. Schneider's treatment of the period beginning when Europeans were first coming into the upper reaches of the watershed and his focus on the watersheds to the south and east of the upper Mississippi are important contexts for understanding much of what has happened here. Readers should be advised, though, that Schneider's tales are like the tales of a steamboat passenger: engaging, interesting, and seductive, but always in need of skepticism and critical inquiry.

*River Republic: The Fall and Rise of America's Rivers*, by Daniel McCool. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012. xix, 388 pp. Map, illustrations, notes, index. \$34.50 hardcover.

Reviewer Mark Harvey is professor of history at North Dakota State University. He is the author of *Wilderness Forever: Howard Zahniser and the Path to the Wilderness Act* (2005) and *A Symbol of Wilderness: Echo Park and the American Conservation Movement* (2000).

Dan McCool has written a hopeful book about the rivers of the United States. McCool, a political scientist at the University of Utah, is the author and editor of several books on water policy and history, especially in the American West. As such, he brings to bear considerable expertise on the subject, especially in regard to the political and policy-making struggles affecting rivers and water use generally. But McCool also knows his history. Throughout this fine study he is mindful of the powerful forces that have reshaped American rivers for decades. In the book's early chapters, he reveals how the Army Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation, along with irrigation districts, private power companies, and a variety of economic and political interests connected to municipalities and states, largely had their way in reshaping rivers for human uses. Since the early nineteenth century, rivers have been dredged, laced with levees, and dammed to control floods, generate power, provide irrigation, and ensure ease of transportation on the Mississippi, Missouri, and Ohio rivers. The often

ghastly condition of numerous rivers reflected as well a habit of treating them as dumping grounds for a barrage of pollutants, industrial discharges, agricultural chemicals and wastes, and an array of old machines, cars, tires, and other detritus of a throwaway society. Throughout, McCool is mindful of this thick history of manipulation and abuse of rivers, and he ably analyzes the history and political jockeying by powerful interest groups, influential lawmakers, and state and federal agencies.

But McCool is primarily interested in exploring the new era we have recently entered in which ideas about rivers have changed dramatically. Across the United States, a bevy of grassroots activists and nonprofit organizations have re-envisioned rivers and sought to clean and restore them. With dams removed, fish ladders installed, walking paths created, and the water cleaned, America's rivers are becoming avenues of environmental restoration and corridors of hope and renewal for the humans who live near them. In McCool's words, "Water hubris is slowly giving way to a new water ethic." At its core, he argues, the movement to restore rivers "means living like we care about the planet, care about the future, and care about one another. It means treating rivers as the common property of all, cared for by all, managed to serve the nation as a whole for innumerable generations" (23–24).

McCool explores such restoration efforts across the country. The author visited rivers and their local defenders from Washington to Virginia and Florida to Utah. His accounts of those visits are served up in a personal, engaging style. Along the way he introduces intriguing and determined individuals and grassroots organizations that have set restoration projects into motion, often against daunting odds. In short vignettes (sometimes too short for this reader), he paints vivid portraits of a variety of such people. Among them are grizzled veterans of the Army Corps and Bureau who have retired from government and are now engaged in river restoration and who sometimes acknowledge the shortcomings of their former employers' sense of "water hubris." Other profiles are of Lee Cain of Maryland, who saw the possibilities of restoring the Anacostia River and helped make it happen, and of 70-year-old Phyllis Clausen of the Friends of the White Salmon River in Washington, determined, energetic, optimistic, and the embodiment of the kind of local activist who should inspire us all. Renata von Tscharnier, planner and architect, helped lay a fresh vision for how urbanites in greater Boston could enjoy the Charles River. McCool also explores the stories, politics, and restoration efforts involved with dam breaching on Oregon's Rogue River, Washington's Elwha River, and Maine's Penobscot River.

Readers of this book who (like this reviewer) are historically inclined might especially admire McCool's solid historical treatments of particular rivers and the challenges facing them. Among the best of these are his treatments of dams and hydropower on the Snake River in Idaho, the Glen Canyon dam and its effects on the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon, recreation on Lake Powell and the lost magnificence of Glen Canyon, and the impact of levees, locks, and flood control structures on the Ohio, Mississippi, and Missouri Rivers. Those more interested in political science will profit from McCool's analysis of the powerful stakeholders who influence river management, including big agriculture, the barge industry, communities in the flood plain, and those who rely on hydropower and flood control. For those intrigued with nonprofit organizations, there is much here of interest and insight as well. It is one measure of McCool's book that it will appeal to different disciplines and types of readers. Even more, he has given us a river book that shows with stark clarity and force the great shift—generational, political, environmental—in Americans' thinking about rivers in the past few decades, a shift that has transformed and restored countless rivers across the country as well as many citizens who live near them.

*In Meat We Trust: An Unexpected History of Carnivore America*, by Maureen Ogle. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013. xiii, 368 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. \$28.00 hardcover, \$26.00 e-book.

Reviewer Wilson J. Warren is professor of history at Western Michigan University. He is the author of *Tied to the Great Packing Machine: The Midwest and Meatpacking* (2007) and *Struggling with "Iowa's Pride": Labor Relations, Unionism, and Politics in the Rural Midwest since 1877* (2000).

Food history is one of the fastest-growing fields of historical scholarship. Everyone eats, so the study of foodways is an ideal prism for understanding significant economic, social, and cultural changes. Food history has also made inroads into the popular history marketplace. Maureen Ogle's book on the history of meat in the United States is aimed at a broad readership and, as suggested by her subtitle, hopes to enliven and even startle Americans into new ways of thinking about our meat-eating proclivities. While interesting and well-researched in many respects, the book is also often misleading and overly polemical.

Two major assumptions about demand and production guide Ogle's perspectives on how the United States became one of the world's most carnivorous nations. Regarding demand, she believes that from the beginning Americans pursued a meat-centered diet. About pro-

duction, with which her book is primarily concerned, she argues that key individuals sparked the developments that paved the way for ready supplies of low-cost meat. She hopes that readers will understand how and why creative entrepreneurs bravely challenged the status quo to make possible the rise of low-cost meat in the twentieth century.

Very little of Ogle's book is devoted to why Americans demanded a meat-laden diet. She simply asserts that they did. She notes, for example, that in the 1700s, "Across Europe, a non-royal was lucky to see meat once or twice a week. A typical American adult male, in contrast, put away about two hundred pounds a year" (4). She glosses over the fact that pork was the primary meat consumed by Americans for much of the country's history. She is also about a century ahead of herself in saying that Americans lost interest in variety meats—meat by-products—after the Civil War. The complex array of cultural, economic, public health, and public policy factors that encouraged Americans' demand for meat is not addressed.

Regarding meat production, Ogle charts the steady drive toward lower-cost meat production through the lens of key entrepreneurs' innovations. Readers learn how Joe McCoy pioneered rail shipments of cattle from Abilene, Kansas, to eastern markets; how Gustavus "Gus" Swift blazed the path of the so-called dressed beef trade—shipping refrigerated carcasses instead of live cattle; how Jesse Jewell created the so-called broiler industry that made inexpensive poultry available to Americans; how Warren Monfort and his son Ken revolutionized the beef industry through feedlot production; how Andrew "Andy" Anderson and Don Tyson added to the Monforts' and Jewell's innovations; and how Mel Coleman capitalized on Americans' interest in natural and organic meats. Only in chapter 6, where Anderson and IBP's development are described, will readers learn much about Iowa's involvement in meat history. That is unfortunate given Iowa's central role in the nation's meat history. Ogle only deviates from an emphasis on key entrepreneurs in chapters 3 and 7. In the former, she scoffs at Upton Sinclair's impact on Americans' desire for meat, and in the latter she belittles Ralph Nader's efforts to expose potentially unhealthy aspects of meat production. While arguably a useful literary device, Ogle's personalizing of these complex trends often obscures the broader institutional contexts that facilitated low-cost meat production.

Ogle's book is at its best in explaining the complicated transformation of meat production during the mid-twentieth century. Her analysis of the rise of the broiler industry is especially insightful. She provides an excellent explanation of how chicken went from being a "rare treat" (100) before the twentieth century to being an American staple

after World War II. Her examination of the rise of the feedlot beef industry is also generally well done. However, her explanation of how the older packers, such as Swift and Armour, “were wedded to union workers who resisted innovations that eliminated jobs, whether plant layout, processes, or machinery” (165) and only tried to adapt by moving their plants out of Chicago in the 1960s and 1970s is woefully lacking. Her criticism of contemporary consumers’ meat concerns as “hopelessly utopian” (251) is unnecessarily contentious since she does not acknowledge the widespread environmental consciousness that has made Americans rightfully concerned about safe meat.

Unfortunately, Ogle’s quirky heroification of the rise of low-cost meat detracts from what is in many respects a well-researched book that draws upon a fine array of primary and secondary sources. A cautionary note to scholarly readers: while the book includes many content notes, the use of general page references instead of specific citations is frustrating and often left this reader wondering about her sources.

*The Red Man’s Bones: George Catlin, Artist and Showman*, by Benita Eisler. New York: W. W. Norton, 2013. vii, 468 pp. Illustrations, bibliographic references, notes, index. \$29.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Kate Elliott is assistant professor of art history at Luther College, Decorah, Iowa. Her research considers the representation of Native Americans in western American art.

Benita Eisler’s new biography of George Catlin, *The Red Man’s Bones*, attempts to do what no other scholar has tried—to offer a full examination of the life, historical context, and problematic motivations of the nineteenth-century American painter and showman George Catlin. Catlin devoted himself to depicting American Indians at a critical point in our nation’s history. During the 1830s, as President Andrew Jackson’s Indian Removal Policy took effect, Catlin traveled past the frontier to document in ethnographic detail the appearance and lifeways of native people in America. In the end he amassed more than 600 portraits that were later exhibited up and down the eastern seaboard (and later Europe), with accompanying lectures by the artist. Catlin worked throughout his life to sell the collection to the federal government, but was unsuccessful. Finally, after his death in 1872, the original collection was given to the Smithsonian Institution. A portion of the extensive collection hangs today in the Smithsonian Museum of American Art in Washington, D.C.

Catlin’s complex and often contradictory biography has made him a controversial figure in American art circles in recent decades, prompt-

ing Eisler to write that Catlin “remains to this day a contentious figure: artist and huckster, celebrity and outlaw, Indian advocate and exploiter, hero and pariah” (8). In the end, Eisler does little to settle the controversy. Instead, she gleefully adds fuel to the romantic fire.

The issue with Catlin is not that we have little on which to base our analysis but rather that we have so much. He has left behind more than a thousand painted works, countless letters, and numerous published manuscripts. Eisler has combed through archives, talked with Catlin experts around the globe, and poured through the artist’s published writings. Her research is to be commended as it allows her to piece together the events of Catlin’s life, events that the artist himself was often guilty of occluding in his own writings as he published sometimes confused and often contradictory accounts of his travels.

Eisler heroically tries to make sense of the self-inflicted confusion. At times she does this well, probing Catlin’s strange relationships with his father, Putnam, and his long-suffering wife, Clara. We also discover more about the shadowy character of Joe Chadwick, whom Catlin mentions repeatedly in his published letters, and also about Catlin’s relationship to other notable American painters, such as John Nagel and Asher Durand. Of particular interest is her attention to the last years of Catlin’s life, a period that few have examined in any comprehensive way.

The question is, however, where this new information comes from. With few footnotes and fewer references, scholars are left unsure of her exact sources. Of course, this is not out of character with the genre, but it is troubling as it is often unclear what Eisler is pulling from her sources and what is pure speculation. No potentially titillating detail is left unmentioned. For instance, as she introduces Joe Chadwick, she speaks of their immediate attraction, built from similar family circumstances but also from the fact that Joe “burst into George’s life a reincarnation” of his brother, Julius (101). Later she refers to Chadwick as Catlin’s “protégé, friend, brother, caretaker, and, probably, lover” (191). Where that characterization comes from, we aren’t told.

Thus unencumbered, Eisler is free to weave an incredible tale of adventure and inspiration, of fortune and folly. Readers are rewarded with a fun, raucous read that is fitting to a man whose adult life was spent creating spectacle after spectacle. Her breathless writing style, though, is better suited to recounting the details of Catlin’s life than to discussing his art work.

In the end, *The Red Man’s Bones* might not be for everyone. Those looking for in-depth art historical or even ethnographic discussion of Catlin’s life’s work had best look elsewhere. Those unwilling or unable to suspend scholarly disbelief will find the text frustrating if not irre-

sponsible. But for those looking to immerse themselves in the complex and romantic history of the American frontier, told through the experiences of one of its most colorful characters, this may be an ideal read.

*Sight Unseen: How Frémont's First Expedition Changed the American Landscape*, by Andrew Menard. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012. xxix, 249 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, index. \$29.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Vernon L. Volpe is professor of history at the University of Nebraska at Kearney. He is working on a biography of John Frémont.

John C. Frémont's report of his first expedition to the Rocky Mountains in 1842 once attracted substantial scholarly attention, partly because of its obvious literary attributes. Now Andrew Menard's impressive analysis should help Frémont's report reclaim its place in the literature of American westward expansion. Indeed, Menard seeks to position Frémont's "best-selling" government report within the gallery of great works of artistic impressions of the western American landscape. The author's erudition is truly remarkable; beyond the usual notice of the works of Thomas Jefferson (and his agents Lewis and Clark), the Hudson River School, James Fenimore Cooper, and Washington Irving, allusions (or significant digressions) are made to the ideas of Pascal, Emerson, Montesquieu, Condorcet, Bacon, Malthus, and others too numerous to mention here. Suffice it to say that Frémont's work is subjected to a thorough literary and intellectual examination.

Clearly, Frémont's exploits provided something intriguing, if not inspirational, for westward-looking Americans. Suggesting that the report made America's "longitude" as enticing as its "latitude," Menard attempts to pinpoint Frémont's influence by contrasting it with the traditional "bleak" or "dreary" images crafted by the reports of Zebulon Pike and Stephen Long. Scholars have long known that Frémont "painted" a more pleasing portrait of the western prairies and ranges, helping make the western "landscape" itself an object of desire. (Other factors naturally contributed, including the work of western expansionists in Washington, led by Frémont's father-in-law, Missouri Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri—not to mention an expanding population and dynamic market economy.) Menard extends this analysis by skillfully placing Frémont's observations within the context of numerous historical, scientific, and literary trends and genres.

Fittingly enough, the heart of Menard's approach focuses on Frémont's seemingly quixotic quest to climb what he (mistakenly) took to be the "loftiest peak" of the Rocky Mountains in Wyoming's



Wind River Range. The author appropriately highlights that climb in scientific and symbolic terms, reconstructing Frémont's skill at reading the peak's elevation with a barometer and planting a makeshift American flag near the summit. Recalled by few Americans today, Frémont's scaling of the "high peak" enthralled his compatriots his entire life and beyond. Throughout his study, Menard develops how Frémont's stress on the West's "topographic geology" refocused attention to the lure of the western landscape, developing a thirst for similar such quests to the "western frontier," desires quenched at first by the region's acquisition and culminating in such modern developments as the National Parks.

This relatively slim volume nonetheless contains much to digest. Its major contribution is to once again place Frémont's explorations at the center of nineteenth-century developments. (Not accidentally was the most noteworthy Frémont biographer the renowned historian Allan Nevins.) Menard alludes to, but does not really resolve, the curious fact that Frémont and his reports have seemingly gone out of fashion as recent scholarly trends have emerged. In this respect Menard's analysis is somewhat more traditional in tone and style, especially on one key point. Left unstated until a thoughtful "Afterword" is the critical issue of the authorship of the "Frémont report." Recent scholarship has tended to stress the literary skill and contribution of John's fascinating wife, Jessie Benton. (That view has accompanied a more critical attitude toward the mercurial career of John Frémont, whose "heroic" stature has suffered as a result.) Menard's careful reconstruction of the writing process largely dismisses the importance of Jessie's role in the content and style of the report. Admirers of Jessie may beg to differ.

If Jessie may be discounted throughout the work, Frémont himself at times fades into the background as the author explores a wide variety of issues, authors, and artists. At the same time, much is claimed for Frémont and the dominance of his work. No doubt it is easier to trace the influence of Frémont upon others than it is to speculate on how Frémont's work intersected with those preceding him. Still, Menard mounts a worthy effort in reconstructing the intellectual context for Frémont's report. He succeeds, too, in showing Frémont's importance in redirecting thinking about American expansion, from the recognition for a transcontinental railroad to link Frémont's West with the developed East, to pointing the way to American dominance beyond the continent's true boundaries. If Frémont's first report "conquered" the Rocky Mountain barrier and boundary, then Menard's work helps to define and corroborate that conquest.

*Frontier Manhattan: Yankee Settlement to Kansas Town, 1854–1894*, by Kevin G. W. Olson. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012. x, 273 pp. Illustrations, tables, map, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Kay J. Carr is associate professor of history at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale. She is the author of *Belleville, Ottawa, and Galesburg: Community and Democracy on the Illinois Frontier* (1996).

In the spring of 1855, New Englander Isaac Goodnow and five other men stood at the junction of the Kansas and Big Blue Rivers in the northeastern sector of Kansas Territory; committed abolitionists, they were to become the founding fathers of Manhattan, Kansas (affectionately to be known by locals as “the Little Apple”). In *Frontier Manhattan* author Kevin G. W. Olson traces the motivations of those founders and examines the history of his native town during its first four decades. He employs a variety of primary sources from early Manhattan and eastern Kansas, ranging from manuscript letters and diaries to local and regional government records and newspapers. The work is a detailed account of one town’s growth and ultimate transition from an experiment in progressive radicalism to the home of comfortable and modern conservatism.

Olson divides the first 40 years of Manhattan’s development into five eras: the territorial (1854–1861), the Civil War (1861–1865), the postwar (1866–1869), the transitional (the 1870s), and the modern (1880–1894). He is clearly the most interested in the earliest period, devoting 11 of 15 chapters to it. Leader Goodnow and his founding compatriots were sent to Kansas, with the help of the New England Emigrant Aid Company, after the passage of the infamous Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854. The law allowed the people of the two territories to decide for themselves whether to allow slavery within their borders. The Aid Company (and others like it) bankrolled the abolitionist settlers’ transportation and startup costs. Along with Lawrence, Manhattan was to become the home of one of the largest groups of “Free-Staters” who flocked to Kansas in the late 1850s.

The radical New England founders (along with another large group of settlers from Cincinnati, Ohio) were proud of their new town and immediately set up progressive institutions that reflected their social idealism. The founders were Methodists and Congregationalists, and their embrace of Protestant moralism was reflected in the close relationship between the town’s churches and its government institutions. In 1858, even before the survival of the town was certain, Manhattan’s Methodists founded Blue Mont Central College, the brainchild of Goodnow, a teacher by trade back in his native Rhode Island. (The college

was transferred to the state in 1863 to become the predecessor of Kansas State University.) According to its charter, the college was to promote "the mental, moral and physical well-being of those who may be trained under its auspices, and thus impart a healthy and vigorous tone to the community" (117). And, Olson writes, that "healthy and vigorous tone" could be seen as late as 1879 in the town's reaction to a group of destitute Black Exodusters; expelled from nearby Wyandotte City, they were "well received upon their arrival in Manhattan" (181).

Olson argues that, by the time Goodnow died in 1894 and the influence of the founding generation had faded, Manhattan's tone had "stagnated" (5). At the turn of the century, he writes, the town's people had maintained their religious values and their support of education, but the progressive traditions of the founders had been replaced by intolerant conservatism. By then, for example, the town's residents no longer welcomed ethnically diverse newcomers. It appears that Olson is, in part, responding to Thomas Frank's *What's the Matter with Kansas?: How Conservatives Won the Heart of America* (1996.) Olson's answer is rooted in Manhattan's history.

*Frontier Manhattan* is an interesting examination of one town's foundations. However, the author makes no attempt to compare Manhattan's story with that of other towns, either within or without Kansas. Olson writes for a general audience, and his book will be most attractive to readers with direct or historical connections to the town itself; it is filled with information about individuals and families. It is unfortunate, therefore, that there is little discussion of Manhattan's place in the larger story of the Midwest and the nation. The Midwest has become a popular field, and direct comparisons are increasingly possible. Still, historians of the Midwest should consult Olson's work for its illustration of a small town's historical reaction to modernization.

*Colonel Baker's Field: An American Pioneer Story*, by Judy Salamacha and Sandy Mittelsteadt, with Chris Brewer; illustrated by Jody Salamacha-Hollier. Exeter, CA: Bear State Books, 2013. xvi, 244 pp. Maps, illustrations, chapter notes, timeline, photography and illustrator notes, bibliography. \$24.95 paperback.

Reviewer Barbara Brower is professor of geography at Portland State University. Although her primary scholarly work is on indigenous groups and ethnic minorities in Asia, she has also pursued some research on Iowa migrants to California.

Thomas Baker's early life followed the pattern set by many other mid-western pioneers. Born in Ohio in 1810, he moved as a young man to

Iowa (then Wisconsin Territory) and served in the Iowa Territorial Militia (hence “Colonel”) and Territorial Legislative Assembly. He taught himself the law and launched a family of nine children with three successive wives. He engaged in the usual suite of pioneer activities (cabin-building, friendships and altercations with native peoples, political and entrepreneurial projects), then took his family west to California in 1850. His story there, too, resembles the pioneer chronicles of the day. Settling at the southern end of California’s Great Valley, he ultimately established a home on the Kern River. “Baker’s Field” there became a way station and settlement site for later-arriving immigrants, then the name of a town—now California’s ninth-largest city, Bakersfield.

This extravagantly illustrated little book is coauthored by a newspaper columnist (Salamacha, whose daughter created the digital images that enliven the narrative) and educator (Mittelsteadt) from Bakersfield, with help from Baker’s great-great grandson Chris Brewer—also the book’s publisher. Baker’s story is told in dialogue, in chapters alternating between imagined conversations from Baker’s day and reconstructions of Brewer’s contemporary conversations with friends and family about his ancestor. An awkward formula in the best of hands, this style of storytelling, initially intended for middle-schoolers, is frustrating and unsatisfactory for a reader looking for either historical information or a good read. The dialogue is improbable and stilted, the characters impossibly wise and noble—and fundamentally boring. Jumping from made-up family discussions in early nineteenth-century Iowa to equally contrived conversations in twenty-first-century California serves no purpose other than to confuse the reader and derail the story. With the help of addenda—chapter notes summarizing history, a timeline of Baker’s life, and illustrated profiles of all the Central Valley individuals who contributed in some way to this project—a motivated reader can try to track the story. Salamacha-Hollier’s laboriously created illustrations (including photographs Photo-shopped to look like paintings and ersatz letters from pioneers that explore the different possibilities of handwriting-like fonts) are often charming and attractive, works of loving attention. And that can be said for the entire book: a great deal of time, care, and affection went into the making of *Colonel Baker’s Field*; others as passionate about Bakersfield as the authors may enjoy it.

*Union Heartland: The Midwestern Home Front during the Civil War*, edited by Ginette Aley and J. L. Anderson. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2013. xiv, 196 pp. Illustrations, tables, notes, index. \$39.50 hardcover.

Reviewer Donald C. Elder III is professor of history at Eastern New Mexico University. He is the editor of *Love Amid Turmoil: The Civil War Letters of William and Mary Vermilion* (2003) and *A Damned Iowa Greyhound: The Civil War Letters of William Henry Harrison Clayton* (1998).

To a casual observer, the only thing that Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa have in common is that they are generally considered to be the states that constitute a region known as the Midwest. To a Civil War historian, however, the nexus for these states is that they provided men and materiel for the Union war effort. That connection raises a question: Was the Civil War experience a similar one for the non-combatants in those states, or were there significant differences for the people living in the region? *Union Heartland*, edited by Ginette Aley and J. L. Anderson, is a noteworthy attempt to address that intriguing line of inquiry. Through its essays, the book suggests that the Civil War-era residents of those states shared much more in common than mere geographical proximity.

*Union Heartland* begins with a foreword by William C. Davis, who suggests that the book is important because of a lack of previous systematic studies about the Midwest. His foreword is followed by an introductory overview of the subject by the editors. The main body is made up of seven essays that examine various ways civilians on the midwestern home front were affected by the Civil War. Two of the essays treat subjects that affected citizens throughout the entire Midwest: R. Douglas Hurt examines how farmers reacted to the problems and opportunities that the Civil War presented; Ginette Aley focuses on the ways rural midwestern women accepted a new familial dynamic during the war while hoping for a return to their previous relationship patterns when peace returned. These essays suggest that, at least in these two areas, the experiences of an Iowan and an Ohioan during the Civil War would have been similar.

Rather than use the broad approach taken by Hurt and Aley, the five other contributors chose to address an issue as it pertained to one individual midwestern state. Michael Gray looks at how the prisoner-of-war camp at Johnson's Island in Ohio became a tourist attraction for excursionists on Lake Erie. The students who attended the University of Michigan during the Civil War and chose to remain in college rather than enlist in the Union Army are the focus of Julie Mujic's essay. Indiana provides the backdrop for Nicole Etcheson's essay, in which she investigates the dynamic (frequently, as it turned out, a troubled one) created when Hoosier women had to move in with their in-laws after their husbands left for military service. Married women in Iowa who chose to remain on their family farm rather than move in with relatives are the subject of the essay by J. L. Anderson. His essay

(originally published in this journal) suggests that Iowa soldiers, recognizing that they could not micromanage from a distance, instead relied on their wives to handle the affairs of the family farm by themselves. Finally, Brett Barker examines the reaction of Republicans in three southeastern Ohio counties to local newspapers that gave voice to the antiwar position held by many in the Democratic Party. Challenging popularly held assumptions about the subject, Barker asserts that the efforts of rank-and-file Republicans in Ohio to suppress dissent by subtly or overtly attacking disloyal newspapers suggest that civil liberties were more severely curtailed during the Civil War than previously believed.

Obviously, Iowans will find Anderson's essay of greatest interest, as it deals directly with the experiences of Iowa women hoping to keep their family farms functioning. The essays by Hurt and Aley will also strike a responsive chord among Iowans, as they devote a significant portion of their analyses to affairs within the Hawkeye state. With a little imagination, readers can benefit from the other chapters as well. For example, are Mujic's conclusions about the students at the University of Michigan applicable to those who attended Iowa colleges during the war? And was the fate of the *Keokuk Constitution* (whose press ended up at the bottom of the Mississippi River) a logical extension of trends Barker detected among Ohio's civilian populace? *Union Heartland* in its entirety should therefore be an interesting read for Iowans.

By way of full disclosure, I should mention that I was favorably disposed towards *Union Heartland* when I discovered that three of the authors had made excellent use of my book *Love Amid the Turmoil*. But I can honestly say that under any circumstances I would highly recommend this thought-provoking look at a region that too often has been neglected in studies of the Civil War on the Northern home front.

*Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation*, by Caroline Janney. The Littlefield History of the Civil War Era. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013. xii, 464 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$35.00 hardcover.

Reviewer Sarah J. Purcell is professor of history at Grinnell College. She is the author of *Sealed with Blood: War, Sacrifice, and Memory in Revolutionary America* and is working on a book tentatively titled "Spectacle of Grief: The Politics of Mourning and the U.S. Civil War."

Caroline Janney's *Remembering the Civil War* is an ambitious book that makes a bold argument, taking on the dominant themes in the grow-

ing historical field of Civil War memory. Janney counters the judgment, argued most prominently by David Blight in *Race and Reunion* (2000), that by the early twentieth century Southern memory of the Civil War had triumphed as the Lost Cause became dominant in American culture and white Northerners acquiesced to a Civil War memory that emphasized a shared military sacrifice tinged with white supremacy and that largely silenced the memory of slavery and its role in the war. Janney, instead, emphasizes a distinction between reunion and reconciliation, and she argues that memories of the "Union Cause" not only survived but became the dominant theme in American patriotism. She also maintains that Northerners did not forget slavery or its role in the Civil War, even as they endorsed white supremacy.

In nine chapters, organized chronologically and thematically, Janney traces how the Civil War generation battled to shape its remembrance from 1861 until after the turn of the twentieth century, when their children and grandchildren took up the battle. The book begins with three chapters tracing the seeds of memory in the war period, fights over the peace in 1865, and the influence of mourning in the war's immediate aftermath. The next three chapters oscillate between North and South, tracing how veterans' and women's organizations, monument-building efforts, and African American civic organizers and intellectuals marked public culture with their own versions of Civil War memory. The final three chapters show how slavery persisted in Civil War memory, even as efforts at reconciliation accelerated after the 1880s; the author pays particular attention to the role of women in shaping the memory of the war, even after the turn of the twentieth century.

Janney uses a wide range of examples, most potently focusing on controversial monument ceremonies, veterans' reunions, and popular culture. She engages the vast quantity of recent scholarship on specific themes in Civil War memory, touching on topics as diverse as the United Daughters of the Confederacy, the veneration of William C. C. Turner, and the cultural power of prisoner-of-war memory. The notes and bibliography can serve any interested reader as a sweeping overview of the past 30 years of scholarship in this important field; the notes bear special attention because Janney often punctuates her argument with extended commentary in them.

Janney is most convincing in her portrayal of how Northerners persistently discussed the importance of slavery to the "Union Cause" even as they often failed to endorse equal treatment for African Americans. She cites many examples of Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) orators and writers who marked the destruction of slavery as

one of the war's greatest achievements, even as some GAR posts (especially in Iowa, she notes) refused to integrate black members. Janney also vividly portrays the rise of the Lost Cause ideology in the South, in a manner similar to Blight, but she makes a new and important point about how Lost Cause proponents at the turn of the twentieth century shifted their dominant emphasis from military defeat to the "abuses" of Reconstruction. She also brilliantly addresses how and why the Lost Cause became feminized.

Overall, Janney's point about Northerners resisting amnesia about slavery is potent, but she does not end up demolishing Blight's thesis. For instance, Janney points out how many Southern veterans were "buying into" the "Union Cause" by mourning the death of Ulysses S. Grant in 1885, but she fails to note how many Northerners likewise had endorsed Robert E. Lee as a great man immediately upon his death in 1870—helping to boost the Lost Cause (173). If the "Union Cause" became so dominant a theme in a generic American patriotism by 1898, such a bland umbrella that everyone from temperance activists to imperialists could insist upon it generically, did this still constitute Civil War memory, or had it changed into something else entirely?

Janney's most important lessons are that historians must be careful when discussing the loaded terms of Civil War memory: reunion and reconciliation are not the same, and neither are race and slavery. Her book will become important in the field, and it will need to be read alongside Blight's to emphasize the subtle power of Civil War remembrance.

*"Dear Unforgettable Brother": The Stavig Letters from Norway and America, 1881–1937*, edited by Jane Torness Rasmussen and John S. Rasmussen, with essays by Edvard Hoem and Betty A. Bergland. Pierre, SD: South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 2013. 148 pp. Maps, illustrations, notes, index. \$19.95 paperback.

Reviewer Marvin G. Slind is professor emeritus of history at Luther College, Decorah, Iowa. He is the translator and coeditor of *Linka's Diary: A Norwegian Immigrant Story in Word and Sketches* (2008).

Norwegian immigrants to America wrote thousands of letters to their friends and relatives back in "the old country," just as those in Norway wrote countless missives in reply. Many collections of letters are found on both sides of the Atlantic, but rarely do both sides of a set of correspondence survive. The Stavig letters from Norway and America is one of those rare instances. The edited volume of this correspondence includes letters written by two half-brothers, Lars and Knut



Stavig. The letters begin a few years after Lars left Norway in 1876 and continue until his death in 1933; Lars's sons continued the correspondence with Knut until 1937 (as they had also done on several occasions before Lars died).

The letters, which constitute approximately one-third of this volume, reflect significant elements of the Norwegian experience, particularly in providing a comparison to conditions the immigrants had left behind in Norway. By almost any standard, Lars Stavig's experience in America would be considered a success. Through hard work and the benefits of the Homestead Act, Lars was able to establish a farm near Sisseton, South Dakota. It was far more productive than what he believed he would have owned if he had stayed in Norway. At times, he sent money back to Norway to help Knut weather financial difficulties there. Lars's sons chose not to follow in his footsteps as farmers, but instead established a successful business in Sisseton. After his wife died and he became too old to manage his farm alone, Lars lived with one of his sons. Because he never learned English, his last years were increasingly frustrating for him. He could not communicate with his grandchildren, who spoke only English, and as his hearing began to fail in his later years, the world around him seemed increasingly alien and uncomfortable.

Sometimes several years passed between letters, but in their correspondence Lars and Knut continued to demonstrate the strong bond that remained between them. The editors have provided annotations that explain many details that might be confusing to readers who are not familiar with some aspects of conditions in Norway or the immigrant experience in general. These are particularly useful regarding family relationships or locations in Norway. Photographs from Norway and America provide excellent illustrations of the individuals and subjects described in the letters.

In addition to the Stavig letters, this volume includes two essays that provide perspectives from each side of the Atlantic. In "One Family, Two Lands: Why Did We Leave?" Norwegian novelist Edvard Hoem provides a Norwegian view of the immigration experience. In a few places, the details of personal relationships (which include Hoem's own family, who are distantly related to the Stavigs) become a bit complicated. Nonetheless, he offers an interesting and informative perspective on Norwegian immigration to America. American historian Betty A. Bergland's essay, "Norwegian Immigration to the United States and the Northern Great Plains," is a valuable complement to the letters. She first gives a brief, yet thorough, overview of Norwegian immigration to America and then ties that specifically to

the Stavig letters, which she places clearly within the framework of the general immigrant experience. Readers who are not familiar with the history of Norwegian immigration may find it useful to read her essay before reading the letters; they would thus gain a better understanding of how the Stavigs' experience represents broader trends in immigration history. In particular, she shows clearly how the lives of second- and third-generation immigrants were vastly different from those of the immigrants themselves. Lars's inability to communicate with his grandchildren, since he had not learned English and they could not speak Norwegian, illustrates the bittersweet character of the immigrant experience: While they were materially successful, many settlers nonetheless felt alienated in their new environment.

As Bergland notes, "The Stavig letters can be seen as both typical and atypical" (129). It is unusual to have both sides of the correspondence survive, and the letters cover a much longer period than most other sets of communication. Yet they also represent many of the overarching themes of Norwegian immigration to America. This volume is a valuable contribution to the study of Norwegian American history and a useful resource for anyone wishing to learn more about the subject.

*Skull in the Ashes: Murder, a Gold Rush Manhunt, and the Birth of Circumstantial Evidence in America*, by Peter Kaufman. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2013. 287 pp. Illustrations, map, notes, bibliography, index. \$19.95 paperback.

Reviewer Patricia Bryan is the Martha Brandis Professor of Law at the University of North Carolina. She is the author of "John Wesley Elkins, Boy Murderer, and His Struggle for Pardon" (*Annals of Iowa*, 2010) and, with her husband, Thomas Wolf, of *Midnight Assassin: A Murder in America's Heartland* (2005).

On February 3, 1897, fire destroyed the general store owned by Frank Novak, an ambitious businessman in the small community of Walford, Iowa. A corpse, burned beyond recognition, was found in the smoldering ruins and assumed to be Novak, who often slept in an upstairs room. But reports quickly surfaced about Novak's gambling habits, his ongoing financial troubles, and his recent purchases of life insurance policies. Also, another man was reported missing: Edward Murray, a hard-drinking drifter, who had been seen with Novak the night before the fire. When the few remaining features of the corpse's "ghastly grimacing skull" (5) appeared to match Murray and not Novak, the newly elected Benton County Attorney set out to find Frank Novak and bring him to justice. Neither the lawyer nor the insurance companies financing the search could have anticipated what

would follow: a six-month pursuit that took detectives across the country and deep into the Yukon Territory, and then, back in Benton County, a courtroom drama that was one of the most widely publicized legal proceedings in Iowa history.

Peter Kaufman presents this compelling story in his excellent new book, *Skull in the Ashes*. The book is divided into four very different but equally engaging parts: the mysterious fire in Walford; the perilous manhunt for Novak; the sensational murder trial; and, finally, the long years of incarceration. Most dramatic is the journey through Alaska, with detectives joining the stampede of the Klondike Gold Rush. Relying on a diary of one of the participants, Kaufman takes readers on a fast-paced adventure as the men scale mountains, navigate rapids, and survive near-death experiences. With Novak's capture, the scene shifts back to Benton County and the legal battle begins. Although the pace of the action slows, Kaufman holds readers' attention with his brisk style of writing and vivid depictions of people and places. The final section of the book describes daily life behind the bars of the Anamosa State Penitentiary.

Although Frank Novak is the connective thread of the narrative, he remains a murky character whose motivations are never clear. For much of the book, Kaufman focuses on three other men, each obsessed with Novak, who drive the action in the story. The author's well-rounded portrayals of this trio constitute the most engaging sections of the book. Red Perrin is the detective, "half bloodhound and half rattlesnake" (57), who pursues Novak down the dangerous Yukon River; M. J. Tobin, the aggressive young Benton County prosecutor, "sharp, streetwise and stubborn as a terrier" (7), who is determined to put Novak behind bars; and Thomas Milner, the "fiery, ebullient and downright cocky" (110) defense attorney from Belle Plaine, Iowa, who matches wits against Tobin in the courtroom.

Based on memoirs, diaries, newspaper articles, trial transcripts, and secondary sources, Kaufman's impressive research has resulted in a compelling and highly readable factual narrative. The book is fascinating for its contextual detail, and it also offers a broad historical perspective, with a particular focus on the striking changes in criminal justice at the turn of the century. Kaufman explores how a new breed of detective investigated crimes, utilizing technological innovations. Newspapers responded to the public's "unquenchable thirst for blood and mystery" (33) with melodramatic reports designed to boost circulation. Prosecutors began to rely on advances in forensic science and circumstantial evidence to prove a defendant's guilt. Prison wardens embraced individual rehabilitation over punishment as their primary goal.

In Kaufman's hands, the story of Frank Novak provides an ideal springboard for lively discussions of these groundbreaking developments.

*Skull in the Ashes* is highly recommended for Iowa history buffs who will appreciate Kaufman's rich characterizations and descriptions of Iowa lawyers and judges, newspapers, courtrooms, and prisons. More general readers will also be captivated by this thrilling turn-of-the-century tale of murder and its aftermath. The black-and-white period photographs, especially those inside Anamosa, are a fine addition to the book.

*"Inherently Bad, and Bad Only": A History of State-Level Regulation of Cigarettes and Smoking in the United States since the 1880s, Volume 1, An In-depth National Study Embedding Ultra-Thick Description of a Representative State (Iowa)*, by Marc Linder. Iowa City, 2012. 3,758 pp. Online publication only at <http://ir.uiowa.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=books>.

Reviewer Matthew M. Mettler earned his Ph.D. in history at the University of Iowa in 2013. He is the author of "A Workers' Cold War in the Quad Cities: The Fate of Labor Militancy in the Farm Equipment Industry, 1949-1955" (*Annals of Iowa*, 2009).

University of Iowa law professor Marc Linder's online history of cigarette regulation is the first scholarly effort to pull into one narrative the complicated and varied histories of state-level cigarette regulation dating back to the 1880s. It is a monumental task and, free of the editorial demands of the printed page, Linder uses 3,758 pages to accomplish it.

The book is divided into six parts that explore two main narratives: the mixed success of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) in banning the sale and public consumption of cigarettes on the state level from the 1880s to the 1920s, and the movement to outlaw second-hand smoke in public from the 1970s to the present. The state of Iowa, which had the nation's longest sales ban (1896-1921), is the focus of three of the six parts. Although the themes of social reform, public health, and American politics and industry are constant, Linder relegates them to the periphery of his straightforward and highly detailed legal and legislative history of state cigarette regulation laws and court rulings, as well as the political contexts that explain their passage and repeal. The author neglects secondary historical work that would enrich the project, but the primary research that he uses is impressive, consisting of thousands of original sources from legal, government, press, and social reform organization archives.

As Linder acknowledges in the preface, the extraordinary length and detail of his study demands justification. Linder bases his justification in what he correctly sees as an absence of historical scholarship on the early period of anti-cigarette state legislation. Cassandra Tate's *Cigarette Wars* (1999) covers this time period, but she neglects state-level regulation. Linder fills this hole in the literature by covering every state, focusing especially on those in the Midwest and West that had the most successful legislation. However, Linder could have filled this hole in the literature adequately in a fraction of the pages. In fact, there is no justification for the book's length beyond the author's desire to include so much highly detailed material for the record. Indeed, a healthy portion of the 3,758 pages consists of unnecessary extended block quotes and massive explanatory footnotes. Despite the length of this volume, a second volume is planned.

Those who plow through the details will be rewarded with some fresh and interesting history, including a narrative of Iowa's militant socialist WCTU president Marion Howard Dunham; a fascinating history of state legislatures banning smoking in the legislative chambers that dates back to the seventeenth century and constitutes the first political regulation of second-hand smoke; and a detailed explanation for why recent smoke-free air acts took decades to become law in Iowa.

Problematic to Linder's justification for the project is that all the added detail fails to substantially alter the historical understanding of early state cigarette regulation, which views it as a product of religious and moral crusading by the WCTU for unenforceable laws that, at the time, were taken even less seriously by most Americans than the WCTU's alcohol prohibition advocacy. Linder tries to change the record by overplaying the importance of the more secular and even socialist wings of the anti-cigarette movement that used scientific and public health appeals instead of religious moral control.

That decision serves the author's larger ideological purpose for the book. Beginning with the title, *"Inherently Bad, and Bad Alone,"* Linder makes clear that this will be a polemical history with a clear villain in Big Tobacco, which valued profit over public health and democracy. By highlighting the emerging scientific and public health basis for banning cigarettes in the 1890s, Linder challenges the popular perception that cigarettes were understood as a menace to public health only after *Reader's Digest* republished Roy Norr's famous article, "Cancer by the Carton," in 1952. But Linder does not need to paint the early anti-cigarette movement into something that it was not in order to establish the book's primary contribution, which is showing that Big Tobacco has been vigorously undermining democratic public

health initiatives from the beginning. It is a fine point that ought to be argued more prominently and creatively to enliven a narrative that often suffers under the weight of detail.

Because of its length and detail, the work is best suited for use as a reference tool. It includes a descriptive table of contents and is also searchable by keyword. This resource will be of particular interest to legal scholars, historians, public health policy experts, and those with an interest in gaining a detailed understanding of how one powerful industry can corrupt democratic politics.

*Houses Without Names: Architectural Nomenclature and the Classification of America's Common Houses*, by Thomas C. Hubka. Vernacular Architecture Studies. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013. x, 112 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$29.95 paperback.

Reviewer Fred W. Peterson is professor emeritus of art history, University of Minnesota, Morris. He is the author of *Homes of the Heartland: Balloon Frame Farmhouses in the Upper Midwest, 1850–1920* (1992) and “Tradition and Change in Nineteenth-Century Farmhouses” (*Annals of Iowa*, 1993).

*Houses Without Names* presents a method for identifying common houses across the nation according to 14 generic house types and the respective floor plans most frequently used to divide and allot functions to interior spaces in each type. This method corrects the failure of guidebooks on American houses that overlook common houses by classifying dwellings according to architectural styles such as Federal, Gothic Revival, or Queen Anne.

According to Hubka's methodology, fieldwork surveys result in noting dominant generic house types in a particular locale or region. Identifying structures representing a specific generic house type allows one to interpret the interior floor plan on the basis of observing and analyzing exterior shape, form, and massing of the house. Location of the kitchen reveals the arrangement of adjacent rooms. The ability to interpret type, size, shape, and placement of windows confirms location of living room, dining room, bathroom, and bedrooms.

A survey of Muscatine and Keokuk counties in Iowa would reveal a dominant house type that is identified in various locales as Hall and Parlor, I-House, Center Passage, or Single Pile, but in Hubka's nomenclature these titles can be designated as #2 Two-Room & One Room Deep Plan Types. This classification designates a single nomenclature that furthers study by researchers wherever the house type is located in the nation. Assigning a name to a common house recognizes its existence in time and place, establishes relationships to other house types,

and establishes a basis for interpreting and evaluating the house in the context of regional, state, and local history.

*Others Had It Worse: Sour Dock, Moonshine, & Hard Times in Davis County, Iowa*, by Vetra Melrose Padget Covert and Chris D. Baker. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2013. xi, 124 pp. Map, illustrations, bibliography. \$17.50 paperback.

Reviewer Ginette Aley is a Carey Fellow at Kansas State University and teaches history at Washburn University. She is the coeditor, with J. L. Anderson, of *Union Heartland: The Midwestern Home Front during the Civil War* (2013).

For millions of struggling farm families, the Roaring Twenties meant privation and poverty, not the excess and prosperity typically associated with the era. In *Others Had it Worse*, Chris D. Baker shares and interprets his grandmother Vetra Melrose Padget Covert's recollections of her impoverished rural childhood during the 1920s in southern Iowa. Hard times and harsh circumstances formed the backdrop for complicated family relationships that often bore the brunt of Covert's father's participation in an illegal liquor trade.

Readers glimpse another, more gritty Iowa in these pages, not unlike the tensions described in Nebraskan Mari Sandoz's *Old Jules*. Students of the history of Iowa and the rural Midwest will gain fresh perspectives on a poor young woman's sense of the place and time, as she reflects on it later in life in rather brief, simplistic, and pragmatic terms. Coauthor Baker frames the topics in relatable headings such as Family Life, Getting By, The Neighbors, Moonshine, and Social Life, which are complemented by revealing photos. One cannot help but be drawn in by Covert's persistence among such difficulties and meager pleasures.

*The Negro in Illinois: The WPA Papers*, edited by Brian Dolinar. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2013. The New Black Studies Series. xliii, 286 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$50.00 hardcover.

Reviewer Julia Mickenberg is associate professor of American studies at the University of Texas at Austin. She is the author of "Left at Home in Iowa: Progressive Regionalists and the WPA Guide to 1930s Iowa" (*Annals of Iowa*, 1997).

It was like a blast from the past when I was asked to review *The Negro in Illinois: The WPA Papers*. Back when I was in graduate school, I wrote a seminar paper on the "The Negro in Illinois," a project co-directed by the African American writer and librarian Arna Bontemps and the white proletarian writer Jack Conroy, both of whom, as Brian

Dolinar notes in his introduction to this volume, “shared a common interest in depicting folk language and lore in literature” and who went on to collaborate on a number of projects, including writing several children’s books together (xxviii). The Federal Writers Project, most known for the WPA guides to all 50 states, also sponsored a number of other national, regional, and local studies, many of them with a focus on African Americans, ranging from collections of ex-slave narratives, to a study of “Negro Folklore,” to state-based studies such as “The Negro in Virginia.” “The Negro in Illinois,” though essentially completed, was never published because its completion coincided with the termination of funding for the Federal Writers Project. I was interested in the quirky kind of history that the Writers Projects created, a quirkiness that came about because the projects themselves were created to make work for unemployed professionals during the Great Depression. Many people, of varying qualifications and varying abilities to collaborate effectively, dug deep into local archives and popular lore for enough material to fill many volumes. They ended up creating a collection of *petite histoires*, that is, stories of common people, or significant figures who, because of their racial, ethnic, class, or gender backgrounds, tended to be erased from historical master narratives until the social history revolution that began in the 1970s. My interest in this particular project was piqued by the list of prominent writers, especially African Americans, who worked on the Illinois Writers Project (IWP), including, besides Bontemps and Conroy, Richard Wright, Katherine Dunham, Fenton Johnson, Margaret Walker, and others—and also by the fact that the study had never been published.

In my own limited forays into the G. Carter Woodson Library and the Newberry Library, I found the array of materials too daunting to pursue. So I was not surprised when Dolinar mentioned that he had been warned about how difficult it would be to collect, edit, and put together copies of chapters that were now scattered in archives around the country. Happily, Dolinar was determined, and his book is a significant accomplishment. Not only does it bring to light a range of wonderful material on a variety of topics (the Underground Railroad, work, churches, professions, social life and social uplift, literature, music, the theater, etc.), but the wonderful introduction and Dolinar’s fine editing skills also make the book a significant contribution to scholarship. For material, and in order to provide deeply textured historical and biographical background and context for the chapters themselves, he has mined archives not just in Chicago and Springfield, Illinois, but also in upstate New York, Tennessee, Washington, D.C.,



and Iowa (the University of Iowa holds the papers of John T. Frederick, director of the Iowa Writers Project). In addition to recovering a lyrical, quirky, and often poetic set of stories about forgotten figures, phenomena, sites, and processes in Illinois history, set against a richly detailed tale of how the project came about and how various chapters came to be written and by whom, and where this work fits into state and national history, the book reminds us that local histories, carefully contextualized, can be of value to national as well as regional audiences.

**Editor's note:** The Iowa Writers Project also began preparation of a history of Iowa African Americans in 1935. Although the reorganized Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration in the state of Iowa continued the project after 1938, the work was never published. A collection in Special Collections, State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines, contains work files created during preparation of the WPA's proposed publication "The Negro in Iowa," including research materials gathered as part of the project, as well as several drafts of the manuscript. Drafts include chapters on African Americans in pre-territorial Iowa; the Underground Railroad; civil and political rights of black Iowans; and African Americans in Des Moines and Polk County. Research material includes biographical sketches; topical papers and material on blacks in Sioux City and Keokuk; Hubert C. Jenkins's M.A. thesis, "The Negro Student at the University of Iowa"; and news clippings. Photocopies of the collection are held in the State Historical Society of Iowa's Iowa City library. Perhaps the Illinois volume reviewed above will encourage an enterprising scholar to do the same for Iowa's "Negro in Iowa" WPA Project.

*Henry Wallace's 1948 Campaign and the Future of Postwar Liberalism*, by Thomas W. Devine. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013. xiv, 408 pp. Illustration, notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95 cloth.

Reviewer Bill Pratt is professor of history emeritus at the University of Nebraska Omaha. He is the author of "The Farmers Union and the 1948 Henry Wallace Campaign" (*Annals of Iowa*, 1988).

In 1948 Henry A. Wallace ran for president on a third-party ticket. Fired from the Truman cabinet in 1946, he emerged as a strong critic of the administration's foreign policy. He was particularly dissatisfied with what he saw as an unjustified "get-tough-with-Russia" approach and ultimately opted for the third-party route. The Cold War was well under way by that time and intensified in 1948 with a Communist takeover in Czechoslovakia and the Berlin Blockade. Wallace's crusade, despite initial optimism, ended disastrously with his ticket receiving only 2.4 percent of the popular vote. The candidate himself was discredited and his supporters isolated from the mainstream of American

politics. Thomas W. Devine's well-researched though somewhat narrowly focused account adds significantly to our understanding of this episode.

One of the strengths of Devine's book is its discussion of the Communist movement from the closing months of World War II through 1948. He shows that although American Communists wanted to follow a line laid down in Moscow, they misread Kremlin intentions. It was widely assumed, then and later, that the genesis for Wallace's third-party campaign was a Moscow directive. Yet Devine has found no evidence to support that idea. At the same time as the American party debated whether it should try to work within the Democratic Party or encourage a third-party insurgency, "Popular Front" or left-wing liberals who backed Wallace were engaged in the same kind of debate. Ultimately, the Communist Party and many of Wallace's followers came to the same conclusion: Run Wallace as a third-party candidate.

Earlier book-length accounts of the 1948 campaign have minimized the importance of Communist involvement in this effort. Devine, on the other hand, stresses such involvement; in fact, it seems to be his major concern. Key figures in the campaign, including its campaign manager, Calvin "Beanie" Baldwin, were Communists or close to the party, and Wallace often was unaware of that fact.

While Devine thought it important to trace the development of American Communist positions in that era, he was less interested in the course of Popular Front liberalism and why so many liberals had become estranged from the Truman administration. A closer look at that topic would show widespread liberal frustration with a foreign policy that seemed to line up with British interests, especially in the eastern Mediterranean, when the United States opted for the Truman Doctrine in early 1947. Devine stresses Popular Front opposition to the Marshall Plan but overlooks earlier liberal concerns with the interventionism of the Greek-Turkish military and economic aid program. U.S. intervention in the Greek civil war was a major departure and a big first step to subsequent interventions that ultimately led to the establishment of U.S. bases around the world.

Wallace was a poor presidential candidate, to be sure, and Devine's account emphasizes his missteps and the role of Communists in the campaign. Yet, as he shows Wallace's ineptness as a campaigner, Truman's record gets little attention. At one point, arguing that the Wallace effort had little influence on Truman's campaign, Devine writes, "The evidence suggests that by July Truman's top political advisers were committed to a forthright stance on civil rights" (124). What is missing here is what happened at the Democratic convention

in July. Liberals led by Hubert Humphrey forced through a strong civil rights plank over a bland version the administration favored. Then, in late July, at the very time the third-party convention was being held, Truman issued an executive order to desegregate the armed forces. Truman would make a real (and ultimately successful) effort to attract the black vote, speaking in Harlem at the end of the campaign. Wallace, on the other hand, took his campaign into the Deep South, refusing to speak to segregated gatherings and denouncing Jim Crow. His efforts in the South helped dramatize the civil rights issue. Devine shares that view and credits Wallace with drawing attention to Jim Crow as a moral issue.

In some respects, *Henry Wallace's 1948 Presidential Campaign and the Future of Postwar Liberalism* is a critique of historians who have seen postwar Popular Front liberalism as a positive force in American politics. To its author's mind, those historians "romanticize Popular Front liberalism, exaggerate its real and potential influence in postwar politics, and largely misunderstand the motives and goals of anticommunist liberals" (xiii). There is some merit to that comment, yet many of those same historians have furthered our understanding of postwar liberalism, including its efforts in the areas of civil rights, civil liberties, and organized labor.

The Wallace campaign marked the end of an era in American liberalism and the Left. Between 1945 and 1948, a sizeable number of liberals thought there were possibilities to build upon the New Deal, promote social justice, and work out an accommodation between the United States and the Soviet Union. Other liberals shared some of the same goals but were unwilling to work with Communists and saw the Soviet Union as a threat to the United States and peace. Ultimately, as Devine and others have shown, that perspective would prevail.

*Food Co-ops in America: Communities, Consumption, and Economic Democracy*, by Anne Meis Knupfer. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013. xi, 273 pp. Illustrations, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 cloth.

Reviewer Philip Nelson is adjunct professor of history at the University of Northern Iowa. He is the author of "The Rockwell Co-operative Society and the Iowa Farmers' Elevator Movement, 1870-1920" (*Annals of Iowa*, 1995).

Food co-ops can be seen as a tangible manifestation of the cultural nexus where interest in food and nutrition, the co-operative tradition, and the desire for participatory democracy and community formation all meet. As such, it is no small or insignificant topic. In *Food Co-ops in America*, Anne Meis Knupfer offers a fresh look at a part of the co-op

movement that has tended toward the small scale, as opposed to many farmer co-operatives, which have often become big businesses. This plays to the author's interests and emphases throughout the book: healthy, affordable food, egalitarianism, small-scale workplaces, and consumer advocacy. In fact, the author is open and honest about being an unabashed advocate of "food co-ops that are responsive to a sense of place" (4). This frankness concerning the author's biases is refreshing and somewhat remarkable (as it is not the custom of otherwise scholarly books to proudly announce their authors' likes and dislikes). Surprisingly, this stance does not compromise the objectivity of the narrative and the analysis, which are generally presented in a balanced and nonpartisan manner, even as the author seeks a new discussion "about the economic and democratic ideals of food" (6).

The book is organized in three main segments. The first part deals with food co-operatives before the Great Depression. The second looks at collective visions of the Depression years. The third focuses on food co-ops founded in the 1960s and later. Each part features a general history of that era, while the latter two parts have additional chapters devoted to case studies. These histories of individual food co-ops, while not long or exhaustive, are where the book really shines. The author has obviously done a great deal of legwork, both literally and figuratively, visiting food co-ops from coast to coast. This research in primary sources is the book's strength and constitutes its main contribution to the historical literature. This effort goes well beyond the usual dusty archival sources to include numerous personal interviews with people in all aspects of the food co-op experience.

By her choices for the case studies, the author gives readers a good introduction to the variety of food co-ops in the United States. But those choices also highlight the difficulties in generalizing about them. For example, why did food co-ops in Ithaca, New York, a college town organization, and one in Hyde Park, an inner-city Chicago co-op, both fail, when other co-ops established during the Depression era, such as the one in Hanover, New Hampshire, and two small-town Vermont co-ops succeed? The author's answer is that successful co-ops were ones that remained small in size and responsive to the desires of their members. Not surprisingly, this coincides with the author's stated biases. The problem here is that the evidence cited by the author does not always seem to support her conclusion. In some cases, bad financial decisions and poor economic conditions appear to be the culprits, while in other cases, local power plays and "poisoned" interpersonal relationships undermined otherwise successful operations. True enough, it may well be that these situations themselves were caused by co-ops be-

coming unresponsive to their members. Nonetheless, this is a difficulty that is never resolved — although, to be fair, it may not be resolvable.

Of special interest to Iowans and midwesterners are the chapters on the New Pioneer Co-operative in Iowa City and cooperatives in the Twin Cities. Both are solid chapters, with the one on the Twin Cities especially fascinating given the extreme ideologically based conflict that erupted in the 1970s. A Marxist-Leninist faction actually took over a food distribution center, The People's Warehouse. Protests, demonstrations, theft of funds, destruction of property, and even physical violence ensued in this year-long battle. The narration of how it all played out is handled well, but one wonders whether more space could have been allocated to a fuller explanation of the conflict's genesis.

The book has a few other minor deficiencies that tend to crop up in the chapters intended as historical summaries: scholarly name-dropping; the introduction of a topic, issue, or case and then leaving it unfinished; and sometimes the jumbling together of a number of seemingly unrelated ideas without an indication of the paragraph's main idea. These all detract from otherwise adequate histories of each period under review. For example, at one point, criminal actions were filed against the A&P grocery chain for selling below cost to drive food co-ops and other stores out of business, but the author does not tell readers how the case was concluded. Overall, these glitches are minor and do not compromise the general value of the book.

The book is laced with headings in bold print of various sizes, denoting the form of a textbook, but at 203 pages of actual text, it is probably too short to fulfill that function adequately. What remains here of substantial value is the noteworthy field research, which will no doubt become the basis of textbooks on food co-ops and other secondary works.

*Wheel Fever: How Wisconsin Became a Great Bicycling State*, by Jesse J. Gant and Nicholas J. Hoffman. Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society, 2013. xxx, 255. Illustrations, notes, index. \$24.95 paperback.

Reviewer Leo Landis is museum curator at the State of Iowa Historical Museum, where he curated the exhibit "Riding through History: A River-to-River Legacy on Wheels."

Is the bicycle for transportation, recreation, or both? Following the Civil War, Americans found new opportunities for leisure and entertainment, and the bicycle provided a means for getting from place to place. Wisconsinites driving these questions are the focus of *Wheel Fever*,

which makes an important contribution to understanding cycling's evolution in the Midwest.

The work reviews 140 years of Wisconsin's cycling history in eight chapters, with a separate introduction and conclusion. In the introduction, the authors present their themes of bicycling as a distinct culture and the tension between egalitarian and conservative camps. Supported through technological and cultural history, the story is an excellent framework.

The bicycle's antecedents came from Europe with push-type two wheelers. After the Civil War, velocipedes introduced Americans to another imperfect version of the technology. The work cites Milwaukeeans Joshua Towne, who purchased a velocipede, and promoter C. D. Veazie, who offered riding lessons, as examples of early enthusiasts.

Chapters two through four cover high-wheel bicycles and the eventual dominance of the safety bicycle. They also consider attitudes of women and non-Anglos toward cycling. Maintaining an emphasis on women and race, the work includes sidebars such as "Early Bicycle Lingo." These short essays provide color.

Chapters five through seven continue to address issues of gender, race, and class. As white bicyclists sought better opportunities, their lobby in the League of American Wheelmen (LAW) sought to improve roadways but also reflected prevailing social attitudes when it eventually banned "colored" members. By 1895 Wisconsin boasted more LAW members than any other western state.

The work concludes with an overview of racing, reviewing the career, from 1891 to 1897, of Walter Sanger, who set records in many races. This chapter also includes a treatment of Indiana-born African American racer Major Taylor and his reception in Wisconsin.

Sometimes the authors overreach in their assessments. They argue that middle- and upper-class white males "worked to restrict or otherwise constrain the spread of bicycling" (xviii). It is an interesting thesis but is not wholly proven. If bicycle racing failed as a sport because it included blacks and women, how does that fit with boxing and the rise of African American champion Jack Johnson? The authors might also have examined coverage of other women's competitions. Racine hosted successful competitions in January 1899, an event that was promoted and covered in the *Racine Daily Journal* (January 11-16, 1899). White males may have sought to restrict participation, but more evidence is needed to better support the contention.

A minor critique is the extensive use of the Milwaukee-based publication *The Pneumatic*. Undeniably rich, its editors, writers, and correspondents had a bias that may not have been reflected in smaller com-

munities. A review of the rise and demise of the periodical and its consolidation with *Farm Magazine* to create *The American Home Magazine* would have added evidence to the end of the bicycling boom of the late 1890s.

*Wheel Fever* is a rich model for bicycling history. Wisconsin and Iowa shared many traits during the era. The states had similar population statistics; in fact, Iowa's population actually exceeded the Badger state's through 1900. Both states had highly homogeneous populations, and southern Wisconsin's geography is similar to Iowa's. Finally, both states pride themselves on an active cycling culture, although Wisconsin can boast Trek bicycles. Gant and Hoffman are to be commended for a work that is useful to both historians and general readers.

*Going to the Dogs: Greyhound Racing, Animal Activism, and American Popular Culture*, by Gwyneth Anne Thayer. CultureAmerica Series. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2013. xv, 296 pp. Illustrations, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Anna Thompson Hajdik is a full-time lecturer in the English Department at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. She is the author of "'You Really Ought to Give Iowa a Try': Tourism, Community Identity, and the Impact of Popular Culture in Iowa" (*Online Journal of Rural Research & Policy*, 2009).

In *Going to the Dogs*, Gwyneth Anne Thayer traces the fascinating but fraught history of greyhound racing in America. She offers insights into how the history of this sport/spectacle intersects with a number of major themes, including social class, consumerism, and ethics. In the introduction, "Rover or Racer," Thayer argues that her study "is not limited to greyhounds in pursuit of a mechanical rabbit; it is the story of Americans at work, at play, and at odds" (20). The author largely succeeds in that goal.

Her first chapter chronicles the early history of coursing in Europe, chiefly Great Britain. Coursing, the predecessor to racing, shared many similarities to fox hunting and other recreational pursuits of the European elite. Chapter two focuses on efforts to legitimate the sport in the United States in the 1920s and 1930s, emphasizing how the state of Kansas became the focal point of the industry in its early years.

Although Thayer characterizes the 1920s as the "golden age of sports," greyhound racing faced early opposition from progressive reformers who viewed it as unsavory because of its associations with gambling and organized crime. In contrast to thoroughbred horse racing, greyhound racing attracted a chiefly working-class audience. Thayer explores at length this tension between horse-racing interests

and the world of greyhound enthusiasts, and it proves to be a major thread of the entire book. The two industries fought for supremacy (and the gambler's dollar), but greyhound racing usually came up on the losing end.

One weakness of the book is that the author spends a significant amount of time on the litigation of multiple court cases involving horse- and dog-racing turf battles. This results in a rather dry narrative at times. While those details provide intellectual heft to the work, the author might have focused more attention on the voices of audiences who attended these events. Thayer does devote significant attention to "dog men," individuals who derived their livelihoods from raising, training, and racing greyhounds, which is a valuable element of this study.

The fourth chapter, "Halcyon Days and Florida Nights," is the book's most entertaining as Thayer discusses the success of greyhound racing in Florida in the mid-twentieth century. More than a measure of glamour surrounded the industry as celebrities and beauty queens posed for pictures with champion racers.

The final two chapters trace the sport's decline, brought on by a number of factors, including the emergence of the Animal Rights Movement, high-profile cases of mass greyhound slaughter, a crowded entertainment marketplace, and the general shift in attitudes about pet keeping. As Thayer argues, the greyhound adoption movement played a huge role in changing attitudes about the breed as the animals transitioned in the public's imagination from working athletes to beloved pets.

*Going to the Dogs* is a valuable addition to the robust field of animal studies, and it would also prove useful to potential courses on American popular culture or twentieth-century U.S. history.

*The Ghosts of NASCAR: The Harlan Boys and the First Daytona 500*, by John Havick. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2013. xvii, 201 pp. Map, illustrations, sources, notes, index. \$19.95 paperback.

Reviewer Daniel J. Simone is adjunct professor of history at Monmouth University. His Ph.D. dissertation (University of Florida, 2009) was "Racing, Region, and the Environment: A History of American Motorsports."

Iowa has an important place in American motorsports history. For decades, the state fairgrounds at Des Moines featured some of America's most well-attended and prestigious dirt races. Every August, the Marion County Fairgrounds in Knoxville—home to the National Sprint Car Hall of Fame—hosts the biggest sprint car race of the year. Numerous nationally recognized competitors hailed from Iowa as well.



John Havick contributes detailed and well-researched accounts of three such figures—mechanic Dale Swanson and drivers DeWayne “Tiny” Lund and Johnny Beauchamp—as they “put Harlan, Iowa, on the map as an improbable racing capital of the Midwest” (28).

The Harlan Boys began their careers on the dry, dusty, dirt tracks of western Iowa. But it was at the popular Playland Park in Council Bluffs where the trio sharpened their skills in the early 1950s. Havick does an outstanding job chronicling Playland’s formative years. He also effectively recaptures the action—the bumping and banging on the speedway and the arguments and fights off the track. As Havick observes, Beauchamp was victimized by questionable calls by race officials throughout his early career. Even so, “Playland events, though rough and competitive, offered Beauchamp little preparation for the slippery ethical ambiguities he would later face” (31).

Havick then details the trio’s subsequent success with the International Motor Contest Association (IMCA) circuit. Formed in 1915, the IMCA was one of the largest motorsports sanctioning bodies in the United States, and Havick gives the entity the scholarly attention it deserves. Havick includes interesting anecdotes from forgotten fair-ground tracks in places such as Shreveport, Louisiana, and Grand Forks, North Dakota, and his use of hard-to-find IMCA newsletters and yearbooks provides excellent specific information.

Eventually, the Harlan Boys headed to Dixie and competed in the growing NASCAR organization. Although Lund claimed a surprise victory in the 1963 Daytona 500, it is Beauchamp’s controversial runner-up finish in the inaugural race that dominates the remainder of *The Ghosts of NASCAR*. Beauchamp, virtually unknown outside of the Midwest, surprised many at the 1959 Daytona 500. After a photo finish with future NASCAR Hall of Famer Lee Petty, NASCAR head Bill France declared the Iowan the winner but later reversed his call. In brief, France contended that photographic evidence showed Petty as the victor. His decision became final. Yet, to this day, many believe that Beauchamp won the inaugural Daytona 500. Was Johnny Beauchamp the only driver to complete all 200 circuits around the super-speedway? At issue—and this is where Havick makes his most compelling argument—was the question over the number of laps Petty completed. Havick’s evidence and analysis are both persuasive and eye-opening. Many will put down this book wondering whether Lee Petty actually finished two-and-a-half miles behind Beauchamp.

*Ghosts of NASCAR* is an important contribution to Iowa’s social and cultural history. Havick’s work also provides an interesting exploration into the rarely publicized “dark side” of NASCAR’s early years.

*The Real Deal: The Life of Bill Knapp*, by William B. Friedrichs. Des Moines: Business Publications Corporation, 2013. xiv, 262 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, note on sources, index. \$20.00 paperback.

Reviewer Bill Silag, now retired, is a former editor of the *Palimpsest*.

A vivid portrait of Iowa realtor and philanthropist Bill Knapp emerges from the pages of *The Real Deal*, a well-documented and very readable biography by Simpson College history professor William B. Friedrichs. The author grounds Bill Knapp's story in a clear and concise interpretation of economic growth and cultural change in the decades following World War II. It is this, and the author's deft handling of diverse primary and secondary sources, that sharply differentiates *The Real Deal* from the conventional business biography.

Born in 1926, Bill Knapp grew up on a farm in Allerton, Iowa, during the prolonged agricultural depression of the 1920s and 1930s, an experience that convinced him he wanted nothing to do with farming ever again. In July 1944, just shy of his eighteenth birthday, Knapp enlisted in the U.S. Navy, taking part in the Battle of Okinawa in the spring of 1945. Once back home, Knapp married his high-school sweetheart and went to work cleaning machinery on the night shift at the Allerton Co-op Dairy—the first in a series of unsatisfying and short-term jobs—looking all the while for work that would give him a chance at economic independence and freedom from the uncertainties of the farm economy. Frustrated in his career search, Knapp completed a one-year certificate program at the American Institute of Business (AIB) in Des Moines and in 1949 took a bookkeeping job in the city's downtown business district—a modest start, but certainly a better vantage point for sizing up his employment options.

Within months, Knapp decided that his future was in real estate. Joining a small Des Moines agency, he was a quick study, finding immediate success as a sales agent and soon moving on to a larger agency. In 1952, at age 26, Knapp purchased the agency from his boss, changed its name to Iowa Realty, and began adding to its sales force. He chose his recruits with care, seeking those whose ambition matched his own. Real estate by tradition had been a business populated by older adults, often retirees. By contrast, Iowa Realty's agents early on typified the energy and values of Knapp's own generation and were dedicated to the fulfillment of "the American dream," a vision whose centerpiece—the single-family home—was Iowa Realty's principal stock in trade.

The author sets Bill Knapp's story in a lively narrative describing the economic surge spurred by the return of American troops from combat; by the impact of the ensuing baby boom on the character of

family life; and by the transformation of Des Moines from a provincial city to a commercial metropolis, soon to be linked to the rest of the nation by the interstate highway system. Strategically located at the crossroads of the system's principal east-west and north-south arteries, Iowa Realty would in time expand its operations to include commercial property sales; land development; apartment, motel, and restaurant management; and construction partnerships.

Iowa Realty also offered its clients innovative sales methods and customer services—including financing and insurance—and a relentless advertising presence. But the primary engine of the firm's growth, in the author's view, was Bill Knapp's entrepreneurial drive. It was his "intelligence and vision that led to great success," writes Friedrichs, for Knapp "could see suburban homes and shopping centers on present-day farm fields; gleaming office buildings where decaying structures stood; or commercial parks on vacant ground." And few rivaled Knapp's uncommon ability to "push ideas into reality by bringing people together and negotiating and closing deals" (xii-xiii).

Those talents have also marked Knapp's philanthropic activities and his service to the community. He has been a major player in the effort to revitalize downtown Des Moines that began in the late 1970s and has since transformed the city's image as a cultural and entertainment center. Stepping back some from the day-to-day operations of Iowa Realty in the 1980s, Knapp established long-term relationships with non-profits such as Evelyn Davis's Tiny Tots Childcare Center and the Door of Faith Mission; he later expanded his vision to include fundraising for Drake University, the Iowa Veterans Cemetery, and the Iowa State Fair, to name a few.

The author's sources include extensive interviews with Knapp, members of his family, business associates, and civic leaders. Friedrichs makes good use of that material, as much of his narrative is told in the voices of people with whom Knapp lived and worked over the years. Several dozen photographs, maps, and other illustrations add visual impact to the story. The overall result is an engaging chronicle of the personal and professional life of an extraordinary business leader. *The Real Deal* will appeal to general readers as well as to Iowa historians, students in Iowa history courses, and business professionals.

## Announcement

THE IOWA HISTORY CENTER at Simpson College seeks nominations for the outstanding master's thesis in Iowa history for 2014. Selection will be based on contribution to the knowledge of Iowa history; originality of the subject matter or methodology; use of sources; and written expression. Nominees must have completed their master's degree between July 1, 2013, and June 30, 2014.

The winner will be announced in the fall of 2014 and will receive a \$1,000 cash prize and an award plaque. Three copies of the thesis and a brief letter of nomination from the thesis advisor, which includes contact information for the nominee, should be submitted to Bill Friedrichs, Director, Iowa History Center, Simpson College, 701 North C Street, Indianola, IA 50125. Application deadline is June 30, 2014.

For further information, please contact Linda Sinclair, (515) 961-1528 or [linda.sinclair@simpson.edu](mailto:linda.sinclair@simpson.edu).

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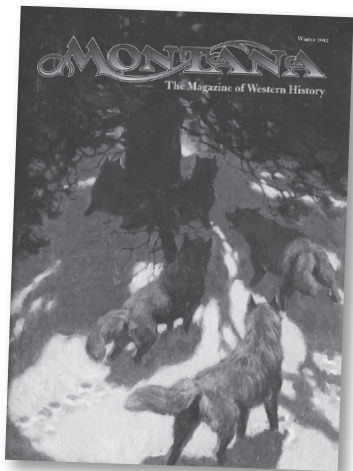
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SHARI RABIN received a B.A. in religion from Boston University and is currently a doctoral candidate in the Department of Religious Studies at Yale University, specializing in American religious history and Judaic studies. Her dissertation is titled, "Manifest Jews: Mobility and the Making of American Judaism, 1820–1877."

## The State Historical Society of Iowa

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