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In This Issue

LISA GUINN, assistant professor of history at Bethany College in Lindsborg, Kansas, provides an account of Annie Wittenmyer's efforts to promote women's usefulness during the Civil War. In the face of resistance from male authorities, Wittenmyer sought recognition of the professional legitimacy – and pay – for the work she and the women who worked with her did.

CHRISTOPHER HOMMERDING, a doctoral candidate in history at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, surveys the news coverage of Grant Wood's Stone City Art Colony to show that the allusions and euphemisms writers used to describe Wood and his activities there highlighted how observers acknowledged the queerness of Wood and others at Stone City and made it fit in the colony's rural landscape.

Front Cover

Grant Wood, ca. 1933, paints a scene on the side of the wagon in which he lived at the Stone City Art Colony. For perceptions of the "queerness" of Wood and the Stone City Art Colony, see Christopher Hommerding's article in this issue. Unidentified photographer, Edward Beatty Rowan Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

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Annie Wittenmyer and Nineteenth-Century Women's Usefulness

LISA GUINN

ON JANUARY 23, 1864, Annie Wittenmyer wrote to Iowa Governor William Stone asking for additional duties to be included in her current responsibilities as Iowa State Sanitary Agent. Wittenmyer was already responsible for gathering and distributing supplies to Iowa troops and securing furloughs and discharges for wounded and sick Iowa soldiers. In addition to that extensive list, she expressed her interest in a variety of tasks, including special diet kitchens for military hospitals. Wittenmyer had already consulted with the U.S. Christian Commission (USCC) about establishing such kitchens, and the plan had met with "universal favor."¹ When she made her request to the governor, Wittenmyer had been in the field of labor doing sanitary work for almost three years. She had fought off attacks on her reputation, faced illness and dangerous travel, and been separated from her only child. Yet she asked for more responsibility, adding to an already difficult task. The question is why.

Previous studies have argued that Wittenmyer was motivated by Christian benevolence centered on the desire to do good works for society as part of a liberal Protestant theology.² I propose

1. Annie Wittenmyer to W. W. Stone, 1/23/1864, Annie Turner Wittenmyer Papers, State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines (hereafter cited as SHSI-DM).

2. See, for example, Tom Sillanpa, *Annie Wittenmyer, God's Angel: One of America's 'First' Ladies from Keokuk, Iowa; Historical Biography of a Christian Heroine* (Hamilton, IL, 1972); and Elizabeth D. Leonard, *Yankee Women: Gender Battles in the Civil War* (New York, 1994), chap. 2. In addition to citing Wittenmyer's Christian benevolence, Leonard also argues that Wittenmyer was motivated by an

another motive. For Wittenmyer, and for many of the women she worked with, the Civil War offered new opportunities to enter the public world where they could experience independence and usefulness as part of a new self-identity. In doing so, they could achieve a sense of their own calling as they had been taught in their liberal education — what Jane Addams would later describe as the “subjective necessity.”³ A more practical motive also influenced Wittenmyer. In short, she needed to make a living. It has been commonly believed that on the eve of the Civil War Wittenmyer was a wealthy widow. She was not a widow at all, however, but rather a divorced single mother who, while not destitute, was certainly not wealthy.⁴

As Northern men volunteered to fight in the Civil War, Northern women desired an important role for themselves. They threw

insistence that women receive recognition for the legitimacy of their work, including pay for that work, which Leonard refers to as “professionalization.” Both emphasize that as a wealthy widow, Wittenmyer could afford to do volunteer reform work.

3. While Addams used this phrase to describe settlement house workers, I apply it to Wittenmyer and the women she worked with. Addams, a beneficiary of a liberal education, argued that women who were educated often found themselves searching for a way to use that education, especially in a time when women’s opportunities, while perhaps growing, were still limited. She argued that they felt “a fatal want of harmony between their theory and their lives, a lack of coordination between their thought and action.” Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House* (1910; reprint ed., New York, 1961), 91. See also Victoria Bissell Brown, *The Education of Jane Addams* (Philadelphia, 2004).

4. It is likely that Wittenmyer was divorced from her husband, William, sometime between 1860 and 1864. Although the divorce records have not been located, other evidence abounds to reveal that William did not die in 1860 as is commonly believed. Annie addressed the issue in a letter to her aunt, Lucy Turner, in 1868: “I do not know where Mr. Wittenmyer is. I have not heard a word of his whereabouts for a long time. He has not been to see Charlie for more than two years I think. He married again, and lived for a time in Chicago, but his wife left him about more than a year ago, which is the last I have heard of him.” Annie Wittenmyer to Lucy Turner, 12/25/1868, Davenport Library transcriptions of letters, in Special Collections, Oxford Library, Miami, Ohio. William remarried in 1864. Thomas R. Baker of Muscatine, Iowa, who has done considerable research on William, has uncovered property records from 1876 documenting that William turned the title of a house in Keokuk over to Annie in exchange for her dropping possible charges against him for back child support. Lee County, Iowa, Keokuk, Deeds, 11/28/1876, book 42, p. 399. He also found probate records from William’s death in 1879 dividing his store inventory in Centerville, Iowa, between his current wife and his two surviving children, Sallie Young and Charles Wittenmyer (Annie’s only surviving child).

themselves into war work, hoping to make a useful contribution and, for some, perhaps, gain new openings for themselves in the future. While these women did not intend to generate a debate on women's work, they did. The debate centered mainly on whether their work should be voluntary, based on the idea that it was a natural extension of women's domestic roles, or paid, giving the work a monetary value in the form of wages and recognizing it as something akin to men's work. Giving the work a monetary value also offered women personal fulfillment beyond the domestic realm and a route to economic independence. And it challenged the status quo.

In antebellum America women were not widely recognized as legitimate workers. According to historian Jeanne Boydston, "the separation of 'private' and 'public' life—of 'home' and 'work'—had become over the course of the antebellum period one of the most cherished truisms of American culture."⁵ The difference between men's work and women's was wages. Although women's work within the home did not carry a monetary value, it was valuable work. Typically, women's work was seen as invisible within the home and devalued compared to the monetary wages of the public world. Even women who worked for wages faced a devaluation of their pay based on the belief that women were only supplementing income or working temporarily before marriage. According to historian Alice Kessler-Harris, because wages were implicitly male and implied that "men had the privilege of caring for women and children," any attempt "to imagine female independence impugned male roles and male egos."⁶ Thus, any attempt to blur the lines between public and private in the realm of work would be difficult and dangerous—especially in the midst of a brutal Civil War.

Wittenmyer and the women she worked with in sanitary and diet kitchen work did not represent a cross-section of society; they were for the most part white, educated, and middle class.⁷

5. Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic* (New York, 1990), x.

6. Alice Kessler-Harris, *A Woman's Wage: Historical Meaning and Social Consequences* (Lexington, KY, 1990), 10.

7. Some diet kitchen women did work in black hospitals, many of them refugee hospitals, and many of the helpers in the kitchens were black.

For these women, though, the Civil War offered the opportunity to build on the reform efforts that had already begun in the prewar period. In the nineteenth century, white, middle-class women, many of them trained in the Protestant traditions of usefulness, duty, and good works, entered the public world as part of reform organizations and as students in the emerging female seminaries, many of which taught a liberal education encouraging students to explore their own calling. As historian Mary Kelley has shown, it was often that liberal education that pushed women into reform work and taught them “to envision themselves as historical actors who had claim to rights and obligations of citizenship.”⁸

Annie Wittenmyer, a liberally educated Methodist, embraced the new opportunities the war provided when she flung herself headfirst into war work shortly after the firing on Fort Sumter. She helped to found the Keokuk Ladies Aid Society (KLAS) and became its general secretary and agent, traveling into the field to survey the needs of Iowa troops. In September 1862 Wittenmyer became a paid state sanitary agent appointed by the governor of Iowa. She resigned that post in April 1864 to focus on creating special diet kitchens for military hospitals as an agent of the USCC. Wittenmyer also founded the Iowa Orphan’s Home, which opened in the summer of 1864 to care for the orphaned children of soldiers. Wittenmyer’s usefulness became defined by the Civil War and her work during that time. She was not a women’s rights advocate in the traditional sense. Instead, she described herself as someone caught in between the discussions of “the home duties of women” and women’s “social and political privileges.”⁹ But in many ways, she exhibited characteristics of those advocates as she blurred the lines of acceptable gendered behavior by pushing women into a visible public role that was recognized with a monetary value, which became part of her self-identity as a woman who needed to support herself. But it was not easy.

On the eve of the Civil War, Wittenmyer was an intelligent, educated woman who believed she could be more useful outside the private home. Given her circumstances as a single mother, finding a way to be useful while earning a living was all the more

8. Mary Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak: Women, Education, and Public Life in America’s Republic* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2006).

9. Annie Wittenmyer, *Women’s Work for Jesus*, 5th ed. (New York, 1873), 5.

important. Even early in her marriage, Wittenmyer had embraced reform. In 1853, just three years after arriving in Iowa from Ohio with her husband, young son, and two stepdaughters, she started a free school and Sunday school for the children of Keokuk. Over the next several years, she suffered the loss of her son and at least two additional children born to her in Iowa and was estranged from her husband.¹⁰

When the Civil War began, Wittenmyer, motivated by the desire to be useful, headed into the field with Iowa soldiers, leaving her only surviving child behind, gobbling up whatever new tasks presented themselves. She made political connections when she could and took advantage of those connections by pitching her own ideas for new opportunities in the future, including opportunities that would allow her to make a decent living. She pushed to legitimate her work by accepting pay when it was offered, believing that women had a right to be paid for their labor, and by insisting that women had an important role to play in the larger public sphere. Receiving numerous endorsements of her sanitary and diet kitchen work from state and federal officials, however, did not prevent Wittenmyer from becoming the target of personal and professional attacks, particularly over pay and efficiency, and she spent much of her career defending her right to do the work and be paid for it and for the right of women to act in a public role.¹¹

WITTENMYER'S BATTLE BEGAN in the local ladies aid societies. Even before the creation of the U.S. Sanitary Commission (USSC), the official sanitary arm of the federal government, women had organized various aid societies all across the North. The KLAS, for example, organized on May 31, 1861, just 18 days before the official organization of the USSC and 4 months before Governor Samuel Kirkwood organized the Iowa Army Sanitary Commission (IASC), the state sanitary organization that worked

10. Iowa State Census, 1854, 1856; 1860 Federal Census, Lee County, Keokuk.

11. There are many examples of the obstacles women faced in their attempts to legitimize their own work during the war, but none is as obvious as Elizabeth Blackwell's exclusion from the USSC. For the complete story, see Jeanie Attie, *Patriotic Toil: Northern Women and the American Civil War* (Ithaca, NY, 1998); and Judith Ann Giesberg, *Civil War Sisterhood: The U.S. Sanitary Commission and Women's Politics in Transition* (Boston, 2000).

closely with the USSC.¹² In the IASC men held all of the paid positions, which the women in the ladies aid societies resented because they had been donating their time for months. There was immediate tension between the newly created IASC and the local groups. An editorial, presumably written by members of the KLAS, revealed their disdain for the IASC, and particularly for a circular it had issued that questioned the efficiency of the local societies. According to the editorial, “we presume that the gentlemen constituting that commission have taken so little interest in the subject that they were substantially in entire ignorance of what has been done.”¹³ The editorial set off a two-and-a-half-year battle between the local societies, led by the KLAS, and the IASC, led by its official agent, A. J. Kynett.

Wittenmyer was a central figure in this dispute. Although she had been an active volunteer field agent with the KLAS since before its official organization, she became a paid Iowa state sanitary agent in September 1862, appointed by the governor and entitled to a salary of \$100 per month, a fortune for a woman to earn at the time.¹⁴ Her appointment was the result of an act by the state legislature and perhaps was offered as an olive branch by the state government to ease the tension between the KLAS and the IASC. The act allowed the governor to appoint “two or more agents” but specified that one must be Wittenmyer.¹⁵ Her appointment was distinct from those of the appointed agents of the IASC, and she continued to work independently through the KLAS. Her high salary and independent work rankled some Iowans, leading to attacks on her.

12. Annie Wittenmyer made her first trip into the field in April 1861, even before the official organization of the KLAS.

13. “Soldiers’ Aid Society, Right-About Face,” *Gate City* (Keokuk), 11/18/1861.

14. *Legislative Documents Compiled by Order of the Tenth Iowa General Assembly, Which Convened in Des Moines, January 11, 1864* (Des Moines, 1864), 36, 39–40. Annie Wittenmyer confirmed her pay at \$100 per month upon settlement, meaning that she was actually not paid monthly but upon her resignation. She notes receipt of \$1,660.77 from Governor W. W. Stone on February 10, 1864. That amount included \$1,550 in compensation and \$110.77 to refund use of her own money. A private in the Union Army, meanwhile, was paid \$13 per month.

15. *Acts of Iowa* (1862), 47–48. Wittenmyer wrote to Governor Kirkwood to lobby for his support for the bill introduced by George McCrary in the Iowa House. Annie Wittenmyer to Governor Samuel Kirkwood, n. d., Adjutant General Records, 1862, SHSI-DM.

Since the creation of the IASC, Kynett had been urging the local societies to route goods through the IASC via Chicago rather than the KLAS via St. Louis. Most local aid societies were confused by this tactic. They distrusted the IASC because of its affiliation with the USSC and preferred to put their supplies in the hands of Wittenmyer, whom they had worked with since the beginning of the war.¹⁶

While Kynett was working to get local societies to work through the IASC, Wittenmyer had been working to secure the place of the KLAS at the head of sanitary work in Iowa. In early December 1861 she wrote to the KLAS vice-president that she had secured arrangements ensuring that every box of supplies sent from local aid societies would go to her and not to the IASC.¹⁷ On December 21, 1861, the KLAS voted unanimously not to affiliate with the USSC or cooperate with the IASC in its attempt to usurp the independence of the organization.

Despite these assertions of their independence, the women of the KLAS believed that their work warranted funding from the state, especially once it became known that the state legislature had appropriated funds for sanitary work. On March 21, 1862, KLAS corresponding secretary Lucretia Knowles informed Wittenmyer that while the governor had welcomed their willingness to unite with the state organization, he had not been receptive to their request for monetary aid.¹⁸ Once the governor created the IASC, with its paid male agents, Wittenmyer came to see that recognition for the legitimacy of the work of the KLAS and security for its independence could only come from a share in the state funds. Writing to Governor Kirkwood on March 30, 1862, Wittenmyer faulted the IASC for "accomplishing nothing." She

16. For distrust of the USSC, see Giesberg, *Civil War Sisterhood*. According to Giesberg, the local ladies aid societies distrusted the male-dominated USSC because it attempted to control the local societies, which saw themselves as more capable and efficient than the Washington-based national organization, especially when it came to local matters such as raising money and supplies. In an editorial on November 14, 1861, Wittenmyer criticized the USSC as impractical. She claimed that the USSC threatened the lives of wounded soldiers by removing them 100-200 miles from their regiments over tough terrain rather than having them taken to regimental hospitals, stabilized, and then removed. *Gate City*, 11/19/1861.

17. Annie Wittenmyer to Mrs. Chittenden, 12/2/1861, Wittenmyer Papers.

18. Lucretia Knowles to Annie Wittenmyer, 3/21/1862, Wittenmyer Papers.

praised the local aid societies for “their efficiency” in alone supplying the hospitals with needed sanitary goods. She warned the governor that if funding was not secured, the KLAS could not continue its good work and that fact would have to be put before the public. On April 15, 1862, the women of the KLAS did take their fight to the press. They demanded that “a portion of the fund at the disposal of the Governor for the relief of our soldiers” be placed under their control “to furnish supplies and pay the expenses of an agent to distribute them.”¹⁹

Their assertiveness paid off. Even before Governor Kirkwood appointed her as a paid agent, Wittenmyer began receiving funds from him. In her records of August 1, 1862, she acknowledged receipt of \$300, allowing her to head to Corinth, Mississippi, with a “corps of nurses” and goods from Iowa.²⁰ The next month, Kirkwood appointed Wittenmyer as a paid state sanitary agent.

Less than a month later, however, Wittenmyer accused the governor of endorsing only the IASC by requesting that all goods and correspondence be directed through it. She defended the KLAS’s record of work. How, she asked, could the governor “recognize local societies, except as tributaries, without creating dissention and confusion”?²¹ For the next year, the KLAS and Wittenmyer continued their tense relationship with the IASC.

The dispute came to a head in November 1863 at a sanitary convention in Des Moines, called for the purpose of discussing cooperation among the various aid societies in the state.²² The conveners were divided between pro- and anti-Wittenmyer factions. Some members of the pro-Wittenmyer group, including Wittenmyer herself, believed that the convention was nothing more than a trap set by Kynett and others to expose Wittenmyer’s alleged mismanagement of sanitary goods. Mary Darwin, a

19. “Report of the Ladies Aid Society,” *Gate City*, 4/15/1862.

20. Annie Wittenmyer to Governor Kirkwood, 3/30/1862, Adjutant-General Records, 1862; Annie Wittenmyer to N. H. Brainerd, 8/1/1862, *ibid.*

21. Annie Wittenmyer to Governor Kirkwood, 10/9/1862, *ibid.*

22. There were several conventions leading to the one in Des Moines, all of which attempted to soothe the tension between the local and state organizations and all of which seemed only to fuel more tension. At a convention in Muscatine, called by Wittenmyer, she proposed uniting all local aid societies into the Iowa State Sanitary Organization with the KLAS at the head. More than anything else, that was the move that most likely led to the Des Moines convention.

friend and colleague of Wittenmyer, emerged as her greatest champion, challenging the criticism of women in sanitary work in general. Darwin scolded both men and women who argued that it was not proper for women to do this work. "It seems to be questioned here," she proclaimed, "whether a woman has a right to risk her life for her country. We believe that every created intelligence has the God-given right to seek to perfect itself, to develop all its faculties and powers in any direction it sees fit." She continued, "Iowa has such, many such, we trust ministering angels to her noble souls; and let us, who cannot share their work in camp and hospital, cheer and sustain them by our labors, our sympathies, and our prayers here at home, not by calling into question the propriety of their conduct."²³

But questioning Wittenmyer's conduct was a key aspect of the Des Moines convention. Leading up to the convention, editorials began to appear in Iowa newspapers claiming that the motive for the convention was personal and not a genuine effort to effect cooperation between competing organizations. Six days before the start of the convention, an editorial noted that the purpose was to harm Wittenmyer. Why, the writer wondered, should anyone be hostile to her unless "it is because she has acquired a fame for good deeds which they envy, or holds a position which they covet"? Another editorial just a few days before the convention emphasized Wittenmyer's unpaid sacrifices, claiming that "she charged nothing for her services" and "won the gratitude of the soldiers and the admiration of the public at her own cost and charges." The writer lamented that if Wittenmyer was removed from her post, it would be an embarrassment.²⁴

Wittenmyer's accusers were busy, too. At the heart of dispute was the KLAS's refusal to affiliate with the IASC (and by default the USSC), preferring instead to maintain its identity as an independent rather than an auxiliary organization.²⁵ But more serious

23. "The Sanitary Convention," *Gate City*, 11/25/1863.

24. "The Sanitary Convention," *Gate City*, 11/13/1863; "Mrs. Wittenmyer," *Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), 11/17/1863.

25. There was probably also animosity about Wittenmyer's close working relationship with the Western Sanitary Commission (WSC) in St. Louis, an organization that had also refused to officially affiliate with the USSC. See James Yeatman to Rev. Dr. H. W. Bellows, 10/29/1861, Journal of William Greenleaf Eliot, Notebook 6, April 1861-June 1863, www.libguides.wustl.edu.

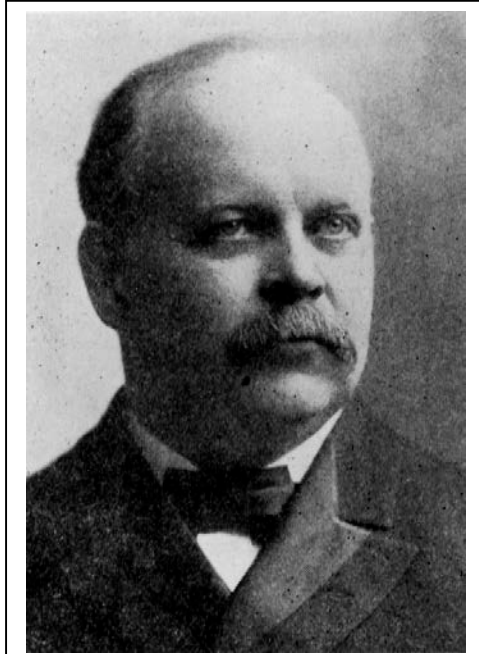


Annie Wittenmyer in the 1860s. From State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

charges were made against Wittenmyer herself. Rev. William Emonds of Iowa City accused Wittenmyer of selling rather than distributing sanitary goods, implying something unethical in her work.²⁶ Another critic of Wittenmyer was Ann Harlan, the wife of Iowa Senator James Harlan, and the Iowa representative of the USSC.²⁷ Two weeks before the convention Lucinda Corkhill of

26. For Emonds's accusation and Wittenmyer's response, see *Iowa State Register*, 1/19/1863 and 3/3/1863. For more on the many accusations plaguing Wittenmyer, see Noah Zaring, "Competition in Benevolence: Civil War Soldiers' Aid in Iowa," *Iowa Heritage Illustrated* 77 (1996), 10-23; Leonard, *Yankee Women*, chap. 2.

27. After the Battle of Shiloh, Ann Harlan (who was in Washington, D.C., at the time) collected supplies and distributed them to Iowa soldiers, a task similar to that performed by Wittenmyer, who also was present after that battle. In fact, Harlan was mostly silent at the convention.



A. J. Kynett, Annie Wittenmyer's antagonist. From State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

Mount Pleasant, Iowa, warned Wittenmyer about an impending attack by Harlan, hinting that the convention was an ambush. "You are aware," Corkhill wrote, "that Mrs. Harlan is your sworn foe." Corkhill proceeded to list the charges that would be hurled at Wittenmyer in Des Moines, including "waste of goods, embezzlement of stores, & reveling & carousing with the officers & drinking the wines & eating the delicacies entrusted" to her care.²⁸

At the convention itself, Kynett accused Wittenmyer of not properly filling out the required sanitary reports, implying that there was not a clear record of the goods distributed or money received. He insisted that Wittenmyer produce vouchers for

28. Corkhill advised Wittenmyer to show up at the convention with "all necessary proofs" of her work. Unfortunately, the letter was dated after Wittenmyer would already have been in Chicago at the sanitary fair without any vouchers. Lucinda Corkhill to Annie Wittenmyer, 11/5/1863, Wittenmyer Papers.

money received from the state and goods distributed for the local societies. Wittenmyer, having come from the field via the Northwestern Sanitary Fair in Chicago, had brought no vouchers, only a detailed report.²⁹

She did, however, offer a vigorous defense. She replied to Kynett's accusations of missing vouchers and late sanitary reports by reminding the attendees of her selfless sacrifice during the 15 months she had worked for no salary prior to her state appointment. She also emphasized the difficult and time-consuming nature of "keeping up the records and correspondence" while also attending to her duties as traveling agent, something Kynett had not experienced.³⁰ In the end, Wittenmyer survived the attacks in Des Moines and actually improved her standing.

After the convention, a new commission was created that unified the local and state organizations. Kynett resigned as the IASC was incorporated into the new commission, but he continued to criticize the work of the local societies. In his final report as IASC agent, he stated that the local societies had "labored under disadvantages to which they would not have been subjected, had they operated in connection with" the IASC from the beginning.³¹

29. The invitation to the Northwestern Sanitary Fair in Chicago, a USSC event, may have been a trap. She was personally invited to the Chicago fair by Mary Livermore, who was part of the Northwestern Sanitary Association, a USSC affiliate. That is noteworthy because Livermore and Wittenmyer were not the best of friends, stemming from Wittenmyer's refusal to ally with the USSC. Livermore was also at the Des Moines convention, and the two women had an exchange over the issue of Wittenmyer's "missing" vouchers. Wittenmyer's presence in Chicago may have prevented her from being properly prepared with vouchers at the Des Moines convention. E. A. Brainerd to Mary Shelton, 10/24/1863, Wittenmyer Papers; *Gate City*, 11/25/1863.

30. "The Sanitary Convention," *Gate City*, 11/25/1863; Annie Wittenmyer, *Annual Report of Mrs. Annie Wittenmyer, State Sanitary Agent to his Excellency Wm. M. Stone, Governor of Iowa, and the Tenth General Assembly* (Des Moines, 1864). Even though Wittenmyer had had an assistant, E. J. Mathis, since shortly after her official appointment as state sanitary agent, it was clear that she did not like filling out reports. With Mathis and eventually a second assistant, Mary Shelton, her record keeping improved. Even when working with the diet kitchens, she maintained an assistant to help with correspondence and official reports.

31. A. J. Kynett, *Report of Iowa Sanitary Commission*, 12/1/1863, 5, 19, Adjutant General Records, 1863. Even before the Des Moines convention, Wittenmyer had apparently explored the possibility of bringing charges against Kynett, a Methodist minister, before a tribunal of the Methodist Episcopal Church. She explored that idea with N. H. Brainerd, military secretary to Governor Kirkwood and a

Ann Harlan's opposition was neutralized, too. After the Des Moines convention, Harlan defended her motives by describing the local societies in their infancy as "spasmodic, irregular, and . . . inefficient." She claimed that her only motive at the convention was to create more efficient measures. Dismissing warnings that the convention would be seen as a personal attack on Wittenmyer and the local societies, she noted that the soldiers' welfare was more important than the "petty interests and ambitions of individuals."³² Almost a month after the Des Moines convention, though, Mary Shelton, Wittenmyer's assistant, wrote to Wittenmyer that Colonel John M. Hiatt, assistant provost marshal in Keokuk, "had a long talk with Mrs. Harlan and says he is convinced she will do nothing openly against you, as she knows the popular feeling too well."³³

Wittenmyer continued to work independently after the Des Moines convention. Criticism continued to follow her, however, leading her to eventually resign as state agent. In February 1864 there was an unsuccessful attempt in the state legislature to revoke her appointment. During the debate, members of the state legislature asked newly elected Governor William Stone to provide information on sanitary agents, specifically Wittenmyer, including their compensation and traveling expenses and whether they sold rather than distributed goods. Wittenmyer opted to write her response to the legislature to ensure "fair and truthful answers" and to ward off prejudice against sanitary interests.³⁴

friend to Wittenmyer. After Wittenmyer presumably asked for advice on the matter, Brainerd pleaded ignorance of the "rules of your church." Believing the threat to her was over, he advised Wittenmyer "to just let things work themselves out." N. H. Brainerd to Annie Wittenmyer, 8/7/1863, Wittenmyer Papers.

32. A. E. Harlan, "To the Soldiers' Aid Societies in Iowa," *Gate City*, 12/2/1863. Presumably the "petty interests of individuals" comment was directed at Wittenmyer and her friends. Harlan's bad relationship with the KLAS dated back at least to May 14, 1862, when the president of the KLAS sent a letter to Wittenmyer that included a dispatch from Harlan. It appears that Harlan presumed to have some power over the KLAS, prompting the KLAS president to write, "I was never more surprised in my life than when I read the contents of this dispatch. All I knew about the whole thing, is just what the dispatch contains. No instructions or request having been given to Mrs. Harlan to draw and distribute our goods." M. A. Howell to Annie Wittenmyer, 5/14/1863, Wittenmyer Papers.

33. Mary Shelton to Annie Wittenmyer, 12/14/1863, Wittenmyer Papers.

34. *Legislative Documents*, 1864, 37.

She confirmed her pay of \$100 per month "upon settlement" and noted that she had paid her own expenses to travel to sanitary fairs and conventions, although the state government did pay other expenses related to sanitary work.

The question of whether sanitary goods were sold or distributed evoked her most defensive response. Most of the time, she wrote, goods were distributed, but there had been a time when goods were sold. In January 1863, at "a time of great destitution and suffering in the army" and "at a time when there were few sanitary supplies being sent from the state" she purchased supplies *with her own money*. Those supplies were sold "at cost" to the troops and "paid for out of their company saving fund" and also used for the relief of wounded and sick soldiers at no cost to them. She emphasized that "there were no proceeds" since she bought the supplies with her own money and let the troops have them at cost or no charge if they were sick or wounded.³⁵ Clearly angry, Wittenmyer took the opportunity to scold the Iowa state government, arguing that the U.S. government had done twice as much for Iowa soldiers as the state government had, including providing her with cotton valued at \$5,000 and free transportation for hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of goods plus transportation for other agents and nurses valued at \$4,000. Finally, she defended the usefulness of a traveling agent, writing that she had traveled over 30,000 miles in the interest of the aid societies, and "the *results* have justified the wisdom of this course."³⁶

Even that forceful response to the legislature and the defeat of the bill to remove her failed to end the criticism. On March 24, 1864, an editorial in the *Charles City Intelligencer* by state representative Henry C. Vinton, while implying that its criticism was directed toward all traveling sanitary agents appointed by Governor Kirkwood under the September 1862 act, only explicitly named Wittenmyer. Vinton specifically criticized Wittenmyer's traveling expenses and her monthly salary. He wondered why the expenses submitted in her recent report were so high if she received free transportation, free telegraph use, and free shipping costs. As Kynett and others had done, he noted that "no vouchers

35. Wittenmyer described this as "one of the most purely generous and unselfish efforts" on her part. *Legislative Documents*, 1864, 38-39.

36. *Ibid.*, 41.

accompanied" Wittenmyer's expense report. But Vinton's real complaint was about her salary, which he regarded as "unjustifiable." While implying that his issue was with the monthly amount for all agents, proposing to reduce it to \$75, he was especially aggrieved that this salary was being paid to a woman. He charged that Wittenmyer did not have the necessary "business qualifications" for such a salary and that she had "inordinate proclivities" for spending money. He supposed that there were plenty of qualified men who would take the job for \$75 or less. He concluded, "It is hoped that if the General Assembly adjourns without passing some act of limitation to the act under which the Sanitary Agents have been employed, that Governor Stone will not pay any such enormous salaries as have been paid, to any Agent much less to any female Agent."³⁷

Wittenmyer officially resigned as state sanitary agent in spring 1864, frustrated by the three years of contention. Her resignation, reported in the *Burlington Hawkeye* on April 9, 1864, showed the frustration felt by friends. The notice read: "The gentlemen 'gran-nies' of our State, we hope, will improve this opportunity to refresh their wearied brains, now that Mrs. W is no longer in their way for 'promotion.'"³⁸

Shortly after the Des Moines convention Wittenmyer began thinking about new opportunities to be even more useful than she was in her current role. On December 29, 1863, she wrote to Mary Shelton, "I have some important plans on my mind now — have written them to the President of the Christian Commission."³⁹ Those "important plans" comprised her proposal for diet kitchens in military hospitals.

ON JANUARY 24, 1864, just one day after writing to Governor Stone about expanding her responsibilities, the USCC authorized Wittenmyer to establish diet kitchens in the Western and Southwestern Departments under her official title of General Superin-

37. Henry Vinton, "A Word to the Tax Payers of the State of Iowa," *Charles City Intelligencer*, 3/24/1864.

38. *Burlington Hawkeye*, 4/9/1864. The exact date of her resignation is not known. In late April she was still signing letters "state sanitary agent."

39. Annie Wittenmyer to Mary Shelton, 12/29/1863, Wittenmyer Papers.

tendent of Diet Kitchens, a paid position.⁴⁰ At the time, the diet kitchens were to be part of the “special duties” assigned to her by the governor as state sanitary agent. Her resignation, however, ended her relationship with the state, making her an official agent of the USCC only.

Wittenmyer may have chosen to ally with the USCC in the diet kitchen work to avoid the problem of legitimacy she had experienced before. Her refusal to ally with the USSC in the past had caused her great pains as sanitary agent. She now sought the legitimacy that the USCC could provide as an organization with the support of the War Department and the federal government.

The special diet kitchens were Wittenmyer’s *pièce de résistance*. Distinct from the general hospital kitchens, special diet kitchens catered to sick or wounded soldiers who required a special diet because of the nature of their wounds or illnesses. Two women, appointed by Wittenmyer, managed each kitchen. The women were under the authority of the surgeon but were commissioned and compensated by the USCC. A special menu designed by the surgeon was given to the women, who supervised the preparation of the meals by convalescent soldiers or hired help and the distribution of the meals by army nurses in the hospital. In addition to their duties as superintendents, the women were encouraged by the USCC to visit the soldiers in the wards.

The first diet kitchen established was at Cumberland Hospital in Nashville as early as May 1864. Eventually, 50–60 diet kitchens were in place, employing more than 100 women.⁴¹ Histories written later by the USCC and Wittenmyer emphasized that the surgeons-in-charge readily accepted the women and the diet kitchens. Establishing the kitchens was not always easy, though. Delays in receiving equipment and supplies caused frustration. In addition, the surgeons did not, in fact, always receive the

40. Lemuel Moss, *Annals of the United States Christian Commission* (Philadelphia, 1868), 667–68. Eventually the diet kitchens were extended to the Eastern Departments and adopted permanently by the U.S. military.

41. Moss, *Annals of the USCC*, 665, 669–70, 682–84. Moss lists 106 women as diet kitchen superintendents plus 3 women as superintendents for various departments. Wittenmyer is listed as the general superintendent. She remained in her supervisory role until the USCC diet kitchens officially closed after the war. She dated her work from April 20, 1861, to November 23, 1865. Annie Wittenmyer, *Under the Guns: A Woman’s Reminiscences of the Civil War* (Boston, 1895), preface.

women with open arms. Often there was tension between them. Nonetheless, Wittenmyer praised the kitchens. "During the last eighteen months of the war," she wrote in her autobiography, "over two million rations were issued monthly." And the diet kitchens continue to be the work most closely associated with her.⁴²

Wittenmyer's earlier experiences in sanitary work affected the way she set up and maintained her diet kitchen work. To ensure that her usefulness would not be criticized as before, she sought to secure recognition for the legitimacy of the work and fought hard to maintain that legitimacy throughout the war. Her plan, proposed and accepted by the USCC, included a supervisory role for herself and a professional role, including pay and titles, for the women she would employ. She emphasized that the women managers were not "cooks" but "superintendents," a much more professional title akin to her own.⁴³ She took this title seriously and was clearly offended when any hospital surgeon referred to the women as anything other than superintendents. On November 7, 1864, Wittenmyer received a letter from a surgeon requesting her to send female cooks for his hospital. She noted, "I answered that I employ no cooks, only superintendents of special diet kitchens and sent him all the conditions on which I would supply. He accepted but no doubt to the day of his death will call them cooks."⁴⁴ That statement is less a reflection on the role of cooks and more on the legitimacy of the women as supervisors of the kitchens.

When Wittenmyer needed to find women to become superintendents, she located and employed many familiar and trusted names from among her allies in the Iowa ladies aid societies. The women managers earned \$20 per month with expenses paid, approximately \$8 more than nurses and \$10-14 more than cooks and laundresses (more, too, than privates in the Union Army). Mary Shelton earned \$60 per month as Wittenmyer's assistant. It is likely that Wittenmyer earned more as an official agent of the USCC with special duties attached.⁴⁵

42. Wittenmyer, *Under the Guns*, 217-18, 267.

43. *Ibid.*, 261, 263.

44. M. A. Banks to Annie Wittenmyer, 11/7/1864, Wittenmyer Papers.

45. I have found little reference to actual pay scales from the USCC. Amanda Shelton recorded in her diary that she was told her pay would be \$20 per month,

Wittenmyer's desire to create special diet kitchens came from her ability to see the value of such care and the belief that women had special knowledge of such work that could and should be applied to the public world. According to the most famous story about the origins of Wittenmyer's diet kitchen work, she was motivated by her personal desire to help her brother, whom she encountered sick in one of the military hospitals in Sedalia, Missouri, early in the war. She noticed that her brother (whom she had no idea was in the area, or sick for that matter) rejected the black coffee, greasy bacon, and bread that was to be his meal. According to Wittenmyer, "There was a look of utter disgust on his face as he rejected the breakfast and waved the attendant away."⁴⁶ Wittenmyer's sanitary report of January 13, 1864, detailed a more practical reason for the diet kitchen proposal: "to use the language of an able Medical Director in the army, 'they [soldiers] are starving to death in the midst of plenty.'⁴⁷

As a sanitary agent, Wittenmyer knew that there were plenty of supplies to be had. The problem was how to provide special diets to those soldiers in need of something more than "greasy bacon and bread." Wittenmyer believed that women were uniquely suited for the work as superintendents because of their association with the domestic sphere, but she also believed that skill could be transferred to the public world and achieve a larger usefulness. Wittenmyer complained that, early in the war, the cooking departments of hospitals were defective because men who were employed as cooks were unskilled at the task. She argued that women who had experience preparing food and caring for the sick in the home would be "received [in camps and hospitals] with a degree of confidence and cordiality" not afforded to males.

and a USCC advertisement stated that the pay for managers would be \$20 per month. The USCC recorded that permanent agents in the field were paid \$40–\$70, depending on position, with subsistence and incidental expenses. Mary Shelton, aide to Wittenmyer, recorded in her diary that from January to June 1865 she received either \$60 or \$90 per month, presumably from the USCC; and she noted in a letter to Wittenmyer that Mr. Parsons (corresponding secretary in St. Louis for USCC) expected to pay her \$60 per month. I have never seen any reference to Wittenmyer's pay. Moss, *Annals of the USCC*, 147; Mary Shelton to Annie Wittenmyer, 2/26/1865, Wittenmyer Papers.

46. Wittenmyer, *Under the Guns*, 72.

47. Wittenmyer, *Annual Report of Mrs. Annie Wittenmyer*, 1864.

She believed that her own public work demonstrated the “importance of having female delegates frequently in the field.”⁴⁸

While labeling women uniquely situated for this type of work, Wittenmyer also acknowledged that the work was different from the daily tasks of domestic economy within the home. She wrote of the difficulties the women faced because “everything is to be done upon a scale much larger than that to which they have been accustomed, and often articles regarded as of prime necessity . . . at home, cannot be obtained, and must entirely be dispensed with, or a substitute be found.” Thus, the women would have to be inventive in a way that they never experienced in the home. Emphasizing the legitimacy of the women in this work, Wittenmyer argued that the “leading medical men of the West express the opinion that, in a majority of cases, the diet of patients is of more importance than medicine. . . . The kitchens have come to be regarded, not merely as an unimportant adjunct to a hospital, to be tolerated, but as a source of benefit to the sick, and service to the surgeon — indispensable where they can be obtained.” Wittenmyer also made known that the diet kitchens were endorsed by the secretary of war, the surgeon general, and even the president of the United States.⁴⁹ Comparing the women who took up the diet kitchen work to Christian martyrs, Wittenmyer praised them for not shrinking from the “dangers of *contagion, and malaria, and shot and shell.*” From the women she claimed to have learned “*what self-consecration and self-denial meant in its deepest sense.*”⁵⁰

Because of her previous experiences, Wittenmyer worked hard to ensure that the early legitimacy gained for the diet kitchen work would not be lost. Shortly after setting up the first kitchen, Wittenmyer received a letter from John A. Clark, agent for the USCC. While noting his full support for the work, Clark expressed skepticism about its potential for success. He was particularly concerned about the difficulty of recruiting women for the task. There were “few American women,” he claimed, “whose energies have not been already overtaxed who are willing to

48. Wittenmyer, *Under the Guns*, 259; “Report of Mrs. Wittenmyer, To the Soldiers’ Aid Societies of Iowa Ladies,” *Gate City*, 11/19/1861.

49. Annie Wittenmyer, *A Collection of Recipes for the Use of Special Diet Kitchens in Military Hospitals* (St. Louis, 1864), introduction.

50. Wittenmyer, *Women’s Work for Jesus*, 95–96.

make the sacrifices necessary for this labor." He agreed to support the experiment but admitted that he did it "with fear."⁵¹

In July 1864 Wittenmyer received another letter from USCC corresponding secretary J. H. Parsons in St. Louis, forwarding a letter from the USCC agent in the Memphis district, Frederick Ensign. Apparently, confusion about the role of the diet kitchen workers had set in once Wittenmyer left the area. The confusion revolved around the official orders given to Wittenmyer from the surgeon general's office authorizing her to establish the kitchens. Ensign noted that the orders pertained only to her and did not extend to the women superintendents. Thus, the official order vanished with Wittenmyer, causing problems on site in the kitchens. He suggested that the orders from the surgeon general be provided to all the diet kitchen superintendents so that they were protected when Wittenmyer was not present.⁵² Wittenmyer got right on the request. By August 1, 1864, Assistant Surgeon General R. C. Wood sent an order to all medical directors and surgeons in general hospitals in the Western Department referring to the diet kitchens as "very useful and practical" and noting that Wittenmyer had "employed proper persons to attend to their arrangement." He ordered all to "give her, *and her agents*, every facility."⁵³ That order would prove to be useful in the future when Wittenmyer sent her assistants and experienced superintendents to set up new kitchens rather than attending to the task herself.

The surgeon general's order gave Wittenmyer a renewed sense of purpose, especially in contending with obstinate surgeons who resented the diet kitchen women and did not recognize their usefulness. In July 1864 Wittenmyer had gone head-to-head with the surgeon-in-charge at Adams Hospital in Memphis, John H. Keenon. He wrote to her complaining that he had been informed that Wittenmyer intended to place women in his kitchens as superintendents. He noted, "That will not do for I know it will create trouble." He insisted that all the women sent "are to come in the capacity of cooks." After the women arrived at Keenon's hospital and proceeded to tell him they were there to superin-

51. John A. Clark to Annie Wittenmyer, 6/1/1864, Wittenmyer Papers.

52. J. H. Parsons to Annie Wittenmyer, 7/22/1864, Wittenmyer Papers.

53. Moss, *Annals of the USCC*, 670 (italics added).

tend, not to cook, he fired off another letter to Wittenmyer. This time he accused her of misleading him about the role the women would play in the hospital. He claimed that the women were doing “very little work.” Thus they were of no use to him. He reiterated his desire for “practical and working cooks” rather than “supervisors superintendents and inspectors.” When Keenon unexpectedly died on August 12, 1864, Wittenmyer reported to Assistant Surgeon General Wood that she had been preparing charges against Keenon. Although Wood would probably be told that Keenon died of disease, she noted, “There is but little doubt that he [Keenon] died of delirium tremors.” She claimed that Keenon had not been sober for weeks and had been in the company of a woman of “doubtful character.” She informed Wood that the diet kitchen women had been “treated with great indignity and driven from the hospital,” a situation she likened to the Inquisition; at times, the women even “feared for their lives.”⁵⁴

That was not all. In the letter’s opening paragraph, Wittenmyer informed Wood that he “would be deeply mortified to know all the facts, as they are disgraceful alike to the medical profession and our civilization.” In addition to her complaints about Keenon, Wittenmyer also complained about Dr. Francis N. Burke at Gayoso Hospital in Memphis. She described Burke as “intemperate, passionate, overbearing, and bigoted” and accused him of degrading the diet kitchen women “to the position of servants.” Sarah Bloor, the diet kitchen superintendent at Gayoso, had been writing to Wittenmyer for months about Burke. Bloor had been prohibited from visiting the wards and had largely been confined to the kitchen area. Wittenmyer said that Bloor had been prohibited from speaking to soldiers anywhere. Wittenmyer boldly suggested that Wood “relieve Burke and save any further trouble or scandal.” She also suggested that Wood take care in appointing a replacement for Keenon. She even included a few names of objectionable and acceptable doctors.⁵⁵

54. J. H. Keenon to Annie Wittenmyer, 7/9/1864, Wittenmyer Papers; J. H. Keenon to Annie Wittenmyer, 7/23/1864, *ibid.*; Annie Wittenmyer to R. C. Wood, 8/13/1864, *ibid.*

55. Wittenmyer also acknowledged Wood’s earlier order of August 1: “I am already under great obligation to you especially for your last order.” Annie Wittenmyer to R. C. Wood, 8/13/1864, Wittenmyer Papers.

The boldness with which Wittenmyer wrote to Wood suggests that she was willing to protect her work and the women she employed and that she felt comfortable enough, given the endorsements of the work, to speak her mind about it; but that did not necessarily translate into real power. Burke remained in his position at Gayoso, much to Bloor's distress. About six weeks after Wittenmyer wrote to Wood, Bloor wrote to her again, clearly distressed that Burke retained his position. She complained that Burke threw out "slurs" about the USCC and that she was scared to draw supplies until there was a change in command. Despite Wittenmyer's attempt to get him discharged, Burke remained at Gayoso until he was honorably discharged after the war. There is no evidence that Adams Hospital ever had diet kitchen superintendents following Keenon's death. Wittenmyer went head-to-head with several other surgeons, usually with a similar result. Despite Wittenmyer's instructions to diet kitchen superintendents that "the order of the surgeon in charge is the law of the kitchens," it is evident that she was willing to stir the pot to ensure the safety, sanity, and legitimacy of the workers, quietly insisting on "autonomous direction of the facilities she established."⁵⁶

Despite the problems some of the women encountered in the diet kitchen work, many of them found a powerful usefulness in their experience. Like Wittenmyer, the women who worked for her were also searching for their own purpose and a way to contribute during the war. She offered them the possibility of doing just that, and they recognized the significance of the unique opportunity. Some explicitly equated the work with personal usefulness. Others regretted giving the work up at the end of the war, anticipating that their lives at home would fail to live up to their experiences in war work.

SOME of the diet kitchen workers took full advantage of post-war opportunities to transfer to work that might give them that same feeling of usefulness. When she was forced to return home on account of an illness before her work was completed, Angelina

56. Sarah Bloor to Annie Wittenmyer, 10/2/1864, Wittenmyer Papers; Letters received by the Commission Branch of the Adjutant General's Office, 1863-1870, 1865, B-1072-Burke, Francis N., 20, www.fold3.com; Jane E. Schultz, *Women at the Front: Hospital Workers in Civil War America* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2004), 168.

Pettis of Wisconsin found it almost unbearable. "It's very difficult for me to accustom myself to this quiet, and seems to me aimless life," she wrote, adding, "Some of the happiest hours of my life have been spent in the Hosp., never can I forget the pleasant associations. I almost sigh, while thinking the field of labor is nearly closed. Not that I would have war. Oh no; But its developing so many characteristics that would have slept in oblivion." Sallie Cowgill of Springdale, Iowa, wrote to Wittenmyer in July 1865, "The pleasantess [*sic*] part of my life has been spent under your care and administration and [I] shall ever be grateful to you for having guided my feet in the path of usefulness. I leave the work a better I trust, and I know a much happier person than when I entered it fifteen months ago."⁵⁷

In Chattanooga in April 1865, Ruth Conrad of Keokuk expressed a desire to continue the work after the war: "I am not fully prepared to say whether I will wish to remain in the work after the war or not. I think it probable however that I will; . . . I want to labor for God and humanity in some way while I live in the world." The work was clearly important to Conrad, evident in an earlier letter to Wittenmyer when she wrote, "Never was life so full of meaning of pure, deep, earnest joy as now." Just one day after arriving in the diet kitchen work it was evident to Mary Shelton that her life had changed. She wrote in her diary that she "never enjoyed anything half so much before," adding, "How insipid everything at home seems." As the war approached an end, Mary Kibben of Mount Pleasant wrote to Wittenmyer, "I love the work very much and fear my time to go home will come before I am ready to go." Ada Miller feared that, as with the soldiers, she would find herself "unfitted" for home life, but supposed "the old ways of life will come back to me in time, that I shall not be entirely useless to myself and society!" And, as time closed in on Jennie Hogan of Muscatine, she wrote to Wittenmyer thanking her "for affording me the opportunity to come out in this work. I would not give the experience I have had in this, for the experience of half a life time in the grind of home."⁵⁸

57. A. T. Pettis to Annie Wittenmyer, 6/5/1865, Wittenmyer Papers; Sallie Cowgill to Annie Wittenmyer, 7/20/1865, *ibid.*

58. R. G. Conrad to Annie Wittenmyer, 4/26/1865, Wittenmyer Papers; R. G. Conrad to Annie Wittenmyer, 8/1/1864, *ibid.*; Mary Shelton, Diary Entry,

Jennie Hogan was able to find fulfilling work after the war; others struggled to find their way. When a delegate from the Freedmen's Bureau contacted Hogan about working in the new schools in the South, she wrote to Wittenmyer to ask if the diet kitchen work would continue. The USCC had recently informed Wittenmyer that the diet kitchens would close on August 15, 1865, or as soon as possible thereafter. Hogan clearly did not want to return to domestic life. A month before she took up her new job, she wrote, "I think we will all feel lost at home now this work is done."⁵⁹

No one expressed the sentiment of "feeling lost" better than Mary Shelton. On May 16, 1865, she wrote of her diet kitchen work, "Our work is rapidly drawing to a close. . . . Comes the question—'what will I do.'" When she returned home to Mount Pleasant on July 21, 1865, she struggled to find the same usefulness she had previously experienced. While she enjoyed being home with her family, she confessed that she was gloomy "to have day after day pass and no time for anything but housework." She got involved in the work of the Iowa Orphan's Home and, eventually, realizing that she needed to make money, took a teaching job. Even though she had been a teacher before the war, she now found the work "terribly dull" and conceded that it was "drudgery." Clearly, Shelton missed the adventurous life of travel and war work and was struggling to find purpose in her postwar life. On December 21, 1865, she wrote in her diary, "My education has cost too much to spend it this way. I look and hope for better things before many days."⁶⁰

7/15/1864, Shelton Family Papers, Special Collections, University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa City; Mary Kibben to Annie Wittenmyer, 2/10/1865, Wittenmyer Papers; Ada L. Miller to Annie Wittenmyer, 5/1/1865, *ibid.*; Jennie Hogan to Annie Wittenmyer, 6/20/1865, *ibid.*

59. Jennie Hogan to Annie Wittenmyer, 5/31/1865, Wittenmyer Papers; Jennie Hogan to Miss Fowler, 7/28/1865, *ibid.*

60. Mary Shelton, Diary Entries, 5/16/1865, 12/21/1865. For more on the Civil War experiences of Mary Shelton and her sister, Amanda, see Theresa R. McDevitt, "'A Melody Before Unknown': The Civil War Experiences of Mary and Amanda Shelton," *Annals of Iowa* 63 (2004), 105–36. A year after Amanda's war service ended, she found a renewed sense of usefulness as a bookkeeper at the Iowa Hospital for the Insane in Mount Pleasant. See Sharon E. Wood, "'My life is not quite useless': The 1866 Diary of an Asylum Bookkeeper," *Palimpsest* 70 (1989), 2–13.

AFTER THE DIET KITCHENS CLOSED, Wittenmyer went home to Iowa, determined to continue her public life and still needing to make a living. For a brief time, she was matron of the Iowa Orphan's Home, the institution she founded and that today bears her name. She left Iowa in 1868 for Philadelphia, where she engaged in missionary work with the Methodist church, became a published author and editor of several journals, and lectured publicly. She played a pivotal role in establishing the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) in 1874 and was elected the first president of that organization. In her speech accepting the presidency, she praised the work women like herself had done during and after the Civil War: "My own thought is that God has been preparing the women of this land for work, for a long time. This preparation began in the more liberal education of woman, and was greatly quickened by demands upon them during the late war; and still more intensified by the various home and foreign missionary societies which have been conducted by women in nearly all the Christian denominations in our land."⁶¹ Toward the end of her life, her focus turned back to the Civil War. As a representative of the Women's Relief Corps (WRC), she began lobbying for pensions for army nurses, a successful endeavor that took almost five years. Annie Wittenmyer died on February 2, 1900, at her home in Sanatoga, Pennsylvania, at the age of 72. She had continued her lecture schedule right up to her sudden death.

When Wittenmyer went into the field of sanitary work in April 1861, she did so motivated by the desire to be useful during a period of great turmoil. She also needed to earn a living as a single mother with no spousal support. She was not consciously trying to change the way society viewed women; nor was she looking to alter the course of history for women. Yet through her work she showed that women could be useful and efficient contributors beyond the home. After the Civil War, Wittenmyer continued to insist that women had a larger public role to play. In 1873 she published *Women's Work for Jesus*, in which she encouraged women, who made up two-thirds of the membership of Protestant congregations,

61. Jack S. Blocker Jr., "Annie Wittenmyer and the Women's Crusade," *Ohio History Journal* 88 (1979), 422.

gations, to “discuss and answer” the question of women’s roles as missionaries “and suggest plans for their own employment.”⁶²

Wittenmyer also continued to see the importance of monetary compensation for women’s work, which is evident in her fight for pensions for army nurses. Deeply affected by the destitution of now elderly women who had served so capably during the Civil War, and believing that they deserved a pension as much as soldiers and soldiers’ dependents, Wittenmyer worked to secure economic stability for them. The Army Nurses’ Pension Act became law in August 1892, guaranteeing a pension of \$12 per month to any nurse who had worked for six months during the war and had been employed by a proper governmental authority.

While the act was a victory, its parameters would not have included the diet kitchen superintendents, so Wittenmyer went back to work and was able to get the original act amended to include the diet kitchen workers, who became classified as having the “*information and skill* of a dietarian or nurse rather than that of an ordinary kitchen employe.” Wittenmyer testified to the Pension Committee that the women not only established the kitchens and superintended the cooking of the meals but also made “daily visits to the various wards to consult with patients, and suggest various delicacies that would tempt their appetites, and to administer to their wants in other ways.” Secretary of the Interior Hoke Smith added, “The dietary nurse sustains a relation to a patient which is much akin to that of a medical advisor. Physicians are themselves constantly urging the efficiency of diet as a safeguard against disease as well as a remedy therefor. It requires intelligence as well as delicate knowledge of the nature and effect of certain foods to fit a woman for such a position. They often have, for this, a peculiar fitness, and the services rendered by such women are invaluable and entitled to great consideration.”⁶³ Smith’s statement confirmed what Wittenmyer

62. Wittenmyer, *Women’s Work for Jesus*, 5–6.

63. Although Wittenmyer successfully worked to broaden the parameters of the act to include diet kitchen workers, attempts to add regimental nurses and field nurses were rejected. Overall, by the time of Wittenmyer’s death, more than 600 army nurses (including many of her diet kitchen workers) had secured pensions under the Army Nurses’ Pension Act. “U.S. Department of Interior Decisions on Pensions and Bounty-Land Claims, 1886–1930,” www.ancestry.com. The act was amended on February 24, 1893.

had known all along: that women who worked during the Civil War made invaluable, useful contributions not only to society but also to themselves.

“As Gay as Any Gypsy Caravan”: Grant Wood and the Queer Pastoral at the Stone City Art Colony

CHRISTOPHER HOMMERDING

AT THE CLOSE OF THE SUMMER of 1932, the *Christian Science Monitor* ran a relatively lengthy piece on a moderately sized art colony in the tiny village of Stone City, Iowa. Located some 25 miles northeast of Cedar Rapids and just several miles outside of the nearby town of Anamosa, the virtual ghost town of Stone City was, in the early 1930s, experiencing a unique kind of rebirth. Earlier that summer, the sleepy village nestled in a corner of the winding Wapsipinicon River awoke, not to the explosive sounds of limestone quarrying, which had been the town’s sole source of industry in the nineteenth century, but to the more peaceful and pensive sound of brush on canvas. This was the Stone City Art Colony and School—the first of its kind the Midwest.¹

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To proclaim its discovery of a troop of artists camped out on an Iowa hillside in the summer of 1932, the *Christian Science Monitor* opened with a headline that – for present-day audiences – might seem a bit provocative. Focusing on the colony’s housing challenges, the periodical declared, “Iowa Artists Live in Ice Carts as Gay as Any Gypsy Caravan.” Indeed, housing for the hundred or so colony participants was in short supply in the tiny village. The bulk of the colony was located near the crest of a hill overlooking the village as it straddles the Wapsipinicon River. There the colonists planted their artistic flag on the former estate owned by nineteenth-century quarrying mogul John Aloysius Green. The sturdy stone buildings Green left behind – an ice house, barn, water tower, and, most elaborate of all, the “Green mansion” itself – served as a combination of studio, gallery, and instructional and living space. In the large Green mansion, female colonists roomed on the second floor, while male colonists bunked upstairs in the attic. The men who did not fit in the attic or could not afford the rooming costs pitched camp nearby in tents, or – as its most famous resident, Grant Wood, did – in old ice wagons hauled from Cedar Rapids to serve as temporary shelter.²

Grant Wood, the Iowa-born artist who just two years earlier had made a name for himself and the art movement known as Regionalism with his now famous work, *American Gothic*, was the faculty director in 1932 and lived in one of ten ice wagons high above the village.³ Helping to shape the *Christian Science Monitor*’s portrayal of the encampment as a gypsy caravan, Wood painted the outside of his wagon with a sweeping pastoral landscape in what would become his familiar style – fantastical scenes of sensually curving hillsides and farmscapes done in sharp, clearly

1. “Iowa Artists Live in Ice Carts as Gay as Any Gypsy Caravan,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 8/25/1932 [special thanks to Kristy Raine for sharing this article with me]; Joan Muyskens, “Stone City, Iowa,” *Annals of Iowa* 39 (1968), 261-74. On the claim of being the first art colony of its kind in the Midwest, see Robert Cron, “Iowa Artists Club Forms Art Colony in Deserted Stone City Mansion,” *Des Moines Register*, 5/8/1932; and Adeline Taylor, “Picturesque Stone City Given New Life by Enthusiastic Art Colony,” *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, 6/29/1932.

2. On the colony’s housing situation, see Harlan Miller, “Stone City Colony Likely to Become Conspicuous Episode in American Art,” *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, 7/31/1932.

3. Muyskens, “Stone City, Iowa.”



The stone tower at the Stone City Art Colony stands in the foreground, with the Green mansion in the background. Photo from State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines (SHSI-DM).

defined lines. The other ice wagon residents followed suit—in form, if not in style—adorning the interior and exterior of their wagons to suit their artistic whims (the interior of Wood’s was sleek metallic silver).⁴

In 1932, when the *Christian Science Monitor* characterized the Stone City colony as a *gay* gypsy camp, the paper was not using the term in the same way it is used today—as a form of identification for individuals who embody same-sex desire. The term did, however, carry similar connotations. According to historian George Chauncey, by the 1920s and 1930s, in addition to its more common usage as a synonym of merry or fun, the word had long held allusions to “immoral pleasures,” prostitution, and anything brightly colored, showy, or flamboyant—allusions that the *Christian Science Monitor* may have been making in its portrayal of the Stone City colony. Additionally, during those same decades, queer men—especially effeminate men who were often referred to as “fairies”—began to capitalize on the fluid character of *gay*, using it as a code word that allowed them to safely and covertly identify each other and friendly environments. *Gay*, however,

4. On the particulars of Wood’s wagon, see R. Tripp Evans, *Grant Wood: A Life* (New York, 2010), 149–50.

was not yet an identity, a term for a person, but simply a way of describing a particularly flamboyant, often effeminate style, which sometimes included male same-sex desire and sex. *Gay* as a fixed political or social identity would not come about until the 1940s, especially during and after World War II.⁵

Although the *Christian Science Monitor's* reporter may not have been aware of the use of the term among certain queer men (although, surely, some of the paper's readers were), the writer was potentially leveraging the protean properties of *gay*—its malleable and open-ended signification—to highlight the sexually non-normative possibilities of a group of artists camping out in the Iowa countryside. Or, at the very least, some of the paper's readers may have interpreted the headline as such. In 1932 an artists' colony in the middle of Iowa was a strange undertaking. Established in the midst of the economic challenges of the Great Depression and located far from major urban art centers, the Stone City Art Colony and School struck some observers as frivolous and even comical. For others, the venture was morally suspect, dangerously freewheeling, and sexually fraught. Like a band of gypsies, the artists were outsiders and were perceived as carrying with them many of the stereotypes of that particular vocation—sexual or otherwise. For a number of artists in attendance, however, queerness—non-normative forms of gender and sexuality—was more than just a stereotype that followed their artistic gifts. For some of them, including Grant Wood, it was an integral part of their lives.

Wood's queerness was then, and continues to be, a widely held open secret. During his lifetime, Wood's non-normative sexuality was generally acknowledged—albeit quietly and euphemistically—by reporters, colleagues, and friends. Born in 1891 on a farmstead just east of Anamosa, the so-called Glamour Boy of 1930s painters left the family farm when he was just ten, following

5. George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940* (New York, 1994), 16–23. On the importance of World War II for the development of gay identities and politics, see, for example, Alan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War II* (New York, 1990); John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940–1970* (Chicago, 1983); and Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton, NJ, 2009).

the death of his father, and moved with his mother and siblings to the outskirts of Cedar Rapids.⁶ Prevailing notions of art and art education sent Wood to the urban centers of Chicago, Minneapolis, Paris, and Munich, but he always returned to Cedar Rapids, to his mother, to his home, to the place where he found the greatest support and inspiration for his artwork.

Wood, art critic Thomas Craven noted in 1935, “lives in Cedar Rapids among people whom Sinclair Lewis would doubtless find rather odious. They are his friends, and the younger generation has acknowledged him to be the leader of a new school of art. He knows these people, knows what they are up to — how they think, feel and do business — he is one of them, and they are the material for his pictures.”⁷ Indeed, Wood posed his sister and his Cedar Rapids dentist as the dour-faced figures in *American Gothic*, and he received crucial financial and social backing from local businessmen. David Turner, for example, purchased many of Wood’s paintings and gave the artist space above his mortuary’s carriage house — known as Five Turner Alley — to use as a studio and home for himself, his mother, and his sister. Such local support came despite Wood’s queerness, despite critic Arthur Millier’s suggestion that, “for a farmer’s son in Cedar Rapids, Ia in the 1910’s to say that he wanted to paint pictures for his life work was as startling as for a girl to announce that she wanted to lead a life of shame.” Millier even quoted Wood himself as saying, “‘Painting was about on a level with tatting [lace] in the opinion of my fellow Iowans.’”⁸

Yet Cedar Rapids — not New York or Paris — was where Wood found the most support for his work and where the nucleus of the Stone City Art Colony formed. And Stone City was where Wood’s queerness — his otherness, his outsidership — found its greatest expression. How did these two aspects of Wood’s life, then — his queerness and his support in small-town Iowa — coexist, and why would the artist choose a tiny, out-of-the-way village in

6. “Could Be Good Farmer! Grant Wood Denies Reputation as Glamour Boy of Painters,” *Los Angeles Times*, 2/19/1940.

7. Thomas Craven, “Grant Wood, of Iowa,” *Chicago Herald and Examiner*, undated clipping, folder 1, “Clippings, 1932–1936,” box 1, Grant Wood Papers, University of Iowa Archives, Iowa City.

8. Arthur Millier, “Bible Belt Booster,” *Los Angeles Times*, 4/7/1940.

Iowa for the art colony he envisioned as the seed of a revitalizing national art movement? What was it about the small-town and rural spaces Wood inhabited that allowed this open secret to flourish? We can glean some answers to these questions by examining the rhetoric used in newspaper coverage of the Stone City colony and in personal correspondence dealing with Wood's career after Stone City. By tracing the allusions and euphemisms writers used to describe Wood and his activities, we can begin to understand the ways Wood's queerness and the queerness of others at Stone City was acknowledged by observers and made to fit in a rural landscape. Moreover, we can begin to see how Wood found relief from the pressures of marriage and other heterosexual dictates in a space like Stone City.

I use the term *queer* here and throughout this article to broadly indicate sexual non-normativity – the desires, people, identities, spaces, and ideas that circulate outside of the heterosexual norms of the dominant U.S. culture, what scholars of sexuality tend to term heteronormativity. *Queer* here is not synonymous with *homosexual* or *gay*, which are historically and culturally specific terms and concepts. Unlike other authors, I do not label Wood as gay or even homosexual, but as queer – as someone whose desire and sexuality operates largely outside of the heteronormative, which Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner consider “the institutions, structures of understanding, and practical orientations that make heterosexuality seem not only coherent – that is, organized as a sexuality – but also privileged.”⁹ Thus, my focus is not on who Wood may or may not have had sexual relations with or how Wood or others may have labeled his sexuality. Instead, I am interested in the way Wood was positioned, by himself and others, outside of heteronormative institutions and understandings and how, specifically, that positioning was articulated at the Stone City Art Colony and School.

The assertion of Wood's queerness is not in itself new. Art historians and other scholars have taken explicit notice of Wood's queerness for the past decade and a half and have sought to understand how the artist's non-normative sexuality was reflected

9. Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, “Sex in Public,” in *Intimacy*, ed. Lauren Berlant (Chicago, 2000), 312.

in and through his artwork. In academic circles, at least, the open secret of Wood's queerness is now open acknowledgment. Most of these scholars, however, suggest that during his lifetime Wood felt the need to hide his queerness and perpetuate a sort of masculine normativity.¹⁰ By contrast, I suggest that, although Wood certainly sought to keep his private life private, in the 1930s his queerness was actually widely assumed and widely articulated—through allusion and euphemism—in the press coverage surrounding Wood and the colony. Moreover, the rural landscape that surrounded the Stone City colony—not the major metropolises he visited as a young man—was the space where Wood's queerness was most at home and the space that offered him the greatest degree of freedom from heteronormative institutions like marriage and family. Indeed, as Wood left the pastoral space of Stone City in 1933 for the institutional landscape of the University of Iowa, a series of changes in the art world and in understandings of sexuality meant that the freedom Wood had experienced at Stone City was, by the 1940s, largely foreclosed, turning Wood's queerness into a liability.

Stone City, Grant Wood, and "Lavender Language"

When the Stone City Art Colony and School first began in the summer of 1932, Harlan Miller of the *Des Moines Register* traveled to the Wapsipinicon Valley and logged a lengthy report on the colony. He boldly hailed the experiment as one "not unlikely to become a most conspicuous episode in American art for 1932." The conspicuous nature of the colony, for Miller, grew from two seemingly glaring contradictions. The first was financial, the second spatial. How, Miller wondered, would such a venture fare during an economic depression, and was it financially wise to choose a location as remote as Stone City? Would it not, Miller

10. See, for example, John E. Seery, "Grant Wood's Political Gothic," *Theory and Event* 2 (1998), 1–35; Joni Kinsey, "Cultivating Iowa: An Introduction to Grant Wood," in *Grant Wood's Studio: Birthplace of American Gothic*, ed. Jane C. Milosch (New York, 2005), 10–30; Sue Taylor, "Grant Wood's Family Album," *American Art* 19 (Summer 2005), 48–67; idem, "Wood's American Logic," *Art in America*, January 2008, 86–91; R. Tripp Evans, "Departmental Gothic: Grant Wood at the U. of Iowa," *Chronicle of Higher Education* 57 (10/15/2010), B10–B11; idem, *Grant Wood*, 6.

implied, seem wiser to establish such a colony in a more urban, more traditionally art-friendly space, a space where the artists would be less “conspicuous”? Miller resolved these contradictions by proclaiming art to be the eternal “business of the soul,” profitable wherever it might appear. “As Americans know,” he wrote, “business comes and goes. As Americans often forget, no matter how often reminded, only art is eternal. It goes on forever, cropping out in astonishing places, the business of the soul thriving even in lean times. . . . Now art has pitched its easel on this rugged Iowa hillcrest, . . . snuggling down among the cows and plows and rural populace as if it belongs there.”¹¹ Art and, by extension, artists, Miller suggested, were not natural elements of the Iowa countryside.

One reason art and the rural landscape seemed so disconnected for Miller was that in the decades prior to the 1930s, art centers and the subject of art itself were city-based. In the years just after World War I, modern artists had, according to art historian Wanda Corn, “focused on industrialized America, replacing the iconography of Niagara Falls and the Rocky Mountains with that of skyscrapers, billboards, brand-name products, factories, and plumbing fixtures.”¹² Before the arrival of Regionalism, modern art, indeed modern America, *was* the city. Wood and other Regionalists, such as Thomas Hart Benton and John Steuart Curry, turned away from this urban focus, which Wood claimed was still far too indebted to the European scene, as they sought to stake out the landscape of a truly and purely American art. Wood and the Regionalists, however, were not simply returning to the romantic landscapes of the mid-nineteenth century, which celebrated the wild and sublime expanses of the American continent as the nation marched steadily westward. Instead, Wood, for example, openly rejected the European-style Impressionism of his earlier work, turning rather to a hard-edged, often satiric style that was brought to bear on scenes of everyday life in Iowa and the Midwest more generally, a section of the country Wood envisioned as the central locus of a new Regionalist art move-

11. Miller, “Stone City.”

12. Wanda Corn, *The Great American Thing: Modern Art and National Identity, 1915–1935* (Berkeley, CA, 1999), xv.

ment.¹³ In disconnecting American art from urban and often European centers, however, Wood and the other Regionalists faced an uphill battle.

As long as landscapes have been considered an appropriate artistic subject, artists have ventured into the countryside to find vistas suitable for their work. Art education, galleries, and artists themselves, however, have more often than not been intimately and inextricably associated with the urban. Moreover, for a half-century or more before Wood and his colleagues opened the Stone City colony, art and artists were often connected to what was perceived to be a particularly urban vice. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries artists became inextricably connected with the bohemian and the queer. Indeed, during this period, art and queerness seemed paired as naturally as farmyards and the Iowa countryside. Art historian Christopher Reed, for example, argues that artists and various medical categories of homosexuality had been intimately entwined and even mutually constitutive since at least the nineteenth century. The sensational (and sensationalized) 1895 trials of Oscar Wilde for gross indecency solidified that connection in the eyes of the public in both England and the United States. Even though Wilde was not a visual artist himself, his trial unequivocally linked avant-garde art and the developing definitions of same-sex desire, as his own work was paraded before the court and used as evidence to convict and label him as a sodomite. After the term *homosexual* began to appear in the same decade, the artist and the homosexual were often viewed as one and the same.¹⁴

Thus, when Harlan Miller and other journalists visited the Stone City Art Colony, they were faced with a group of individuals tinged with queerness and set down in a post-industrial rural landscape far outside their “natural” urban environment. But rather than condemn, ostracize, or lament the presence of queer artists like Wood, visitors and neighbors generally greeted the colony with lighthearted suspicion and knowing humor – with what historian John Howard calls the “heterosexual will to not-know.”¹⁵

13. See, for example, Kinsey, “Cultivating Iowa,” 24.

14. Christopher Reed, *Art and Homosexuality: A History of Ideas* (New York, 2011), 94.

15. John Howard, *Men Like That: A Southern Queer History* (Chicago, 1999), xvi.

This is the ability to see queerness and to tacitly acknowledge it, to implicitly tolerate it but explicitly deny its presence. It is the knowing wink, the surreptitious nod, and the cryptic gesture, and is most often spoken through allusion, metaphor, and euphemism. For Howard, this ability to look the other way, to feign ignorance about a queer individual or group, was especially powerful in rural and small-town spaces because homosexuality and homosexuals could always be located somewhere else – notably, in the city – and the “discovery” of queerness could always be figured as something new, something previously unknown. That was precisely what allowed the queerness of artists like Wood, and of the Stone City colony in general, to be so snugly incorporated among the hills of the Wapsipinicon by journalists and commentators like Miller.

In many ways, much of Miller’s piece is itself a study in feigned ignorance, in the “heterosexual will to not-know.” After waxing eloquent about art as the business of the soul, for example, Miller took care to reaffirm his own credentials as a man’s man (just not *that* kind) by parenthetically claiming that the temptation to get all touchy-feely was just too much, given the surroundings and the company. “No ignorant layman like me,” Miller wrote, taking care to place himself outside of implicitly queer artistic circles, “could write about an art colony without indulging in a little flight of lavender lingo.”¹⁶ By the 1930s, lavender was a color that connoted both effeminacy and homosexuality, and Miller’s invocation here was likely meant to signal the perceived queerness – the otherness – of art and artists.¹⁷ But Miller reassured his readers that that particular linguistic temptation was only a passing fancy for himself and for colony residents as well. The artists in Stone City – tinged with lavender as they may have been – were really good, hard-working folks who got along well with their new neighbors. “The natives are extremely friendly and hospitable to the artists,” Miller wrote. “In the [nineteenth-century] boom days an art colony might have been regarded as freakish; today it strikes the populace as somewhat heroic.”¹⁸ Artists, odd

16. Miller, “Stone City.”

17. Jonathon Green, *Cassell’s Dictionary of Slang* (London, 2003), 718.

18. Miller, “Stone City.”

as they were, were bringing the community back to life—at least for a few months out of the year. Even if the colony was not to last (and it did not), at least it was momentarily a profitable venture for some of the local residents who supplied the colony with food and other necessary goods.¹⁹

Moreover, when it came to the question of sex, Miller guaranteed that there was “No Call for Chaperones,” as the sleeping quarters of male and female students were separate and the whole encampment was far too busy and too familial in nature for any possible impropriety. Notably, Miller pointed out that “several sets of husbands and wives are enrolled, too; but their chaperonage is hardly needed. There is a man-to-man, brother and sister attitude between the sexes. And everyone is working too hard painting to romance a great deal.”²⁰ Despite his assurances, however, Miller’s piece, at times, seems a bit too anxious to make his point. Regarding the ice wagons where Wood and a handful of other men lived, for example, Miller wrote, “These ice wagons hold just one cot each, a tight squeeze, with mosquito netting to rebuff mosquitoes and wandering visitors.”²¹ Either Miller did not actually visit the wagons (or at least not all of them) or he was feigning ignorance to construct a particular narrative to erase the possibility of sex, and of queer sex in particular.

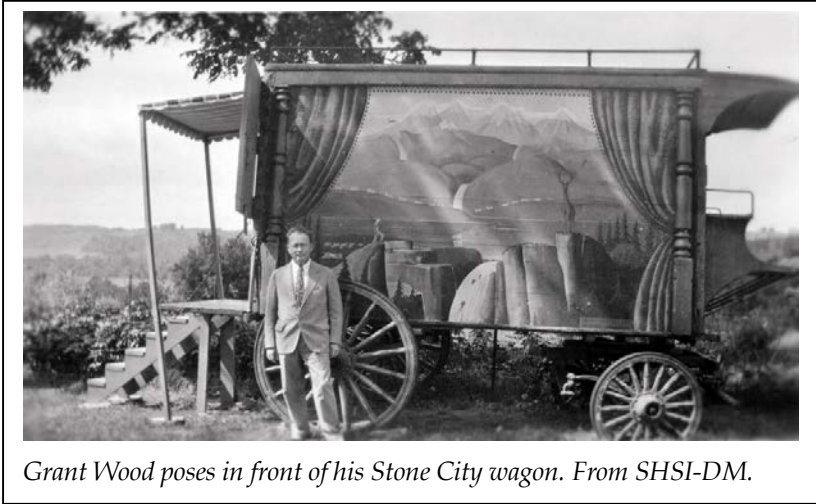
Wood’s own ice wagon, for example, held sleeping space for—and indeed housed—more than one person. As Wood’s most recent biographer, art historian R. Tripp Evans, found, “John Bloom, the colony’s groundskeeper and later a celebrated artist in his own right, shared Wood’s wagon for much of that first summer.”²² Additionally, in one of her many columns for the *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, Adeline Taylor noted that in the colony’s second season Wood again shared his wagon with a fellow artist,

19. As it turns out, the colony was far better at art than accounting. During both summers of the colony it purchased supplies and goods from various local merchants, much of it on credit that was not paid off until 1934. See, for example, Grant Wood to John C. Reid, September 1934, folder 1, box 1, John C. Reid Papers, Special Collections, University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa City.

20. Miller, “Stone City.”

21. *Ibid.*

22. Evans, *Grant Wood*, 151–52.



Grant Wood poses in front of his Stone City wagon. From SHSI-DM.

this time with “Charles Keeler of California . . . famous for his etchings.”²³ While these rooming couples may have had perfectly platonic relationships, the point is that Miller either never visited the wagon of the most famous artist at the colony or chose to ignore and instead speak euphemistically about the possibility of queer liaisons at Stone City. Mosquito netting, after all, might work fine for bloodthirsty insects, but it would likely be a poor deterrent for “wandering visitors” in the form of other colonists – of either sex.

Wood actually gets little coverage in Miller’s piece, as the journalist’s focus was more generally on the colony as a whole. Still, the article opened by describing the colony’s most high-profile resident as a visual paradox in rural masculinity: “A muscular, ruddy, broad browed man in overalls . . . on an Iowa hilltop fingering a magazine newly arrived from London.”²⁴ Masculine characterizations were not absent in journalists’ depictions of Wood, as similar articles described the artist as “a sturdy, four-square son of the Middle West.”²⁵ But such descriptions were in the minority, and when they did appear they often echoed Miller

23. Adeline Taylor, “Sickle and Sheaf, Recreation Center for Art Colony, Is Christened at Stone City,” *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, 7/2/1933.

24. Miller, “Stone City.”

25. Arthur Millier, “Bible Belt Booster,” *Los Angeles Times*, 4/7/1940.

and hinted at Wood's lack of masculinity even as they celebrated it. Following Miller's example, other journalists articulated Wood's queerness through small comments on his character, appearance, or mannerisms, suggesting that there was something less than masculine about him. Few *real* Iowa farmers, for example, were likely reading European magazines. In this way, journalists undermined Wood's masculinity by portraying him as effeminate, soft, and uninterested in women.

In December 1934, for example, a year-and-a-half after the colony's second summer, *Time* magazine ran a piece proclaiming the arrival of Regionalism on the national art scene. "In U.S. sales of contemporary paintings," according to the story, "observers noted a significant difference. This year the French schools seem to be slipping in popular favor while a U.S. school, bent on portraying the U.S. scene, is coming to the fore." As leaders of this new movement, Wood, Benton, and Curry each received an extensive write-up in the piece. In detailing the lives of each of these men, however, *Time* positioned Wood's queerness in rather stark relief from Benton and Curry's masculinity. Benton, for example, was hailed by *Time* as "the most virile of U.S. painters of the U.S. Scene" — "a short wiry man with an unruly crop of black hair, [who] lives with his beauteous Italian wife and one small son in a picture-cluttered downtown Manhattan flat." As if Benton's heterosexual prowess was not enough to prove his masculinity, the writers at *Time* also noted his disavowal of effete and ultimately effeminate styles of French Impressionism. "At 17," the authors tell us, "artist Benton gave up a job as surveyor's assistant in the lead and zinc district outside Joplin to do newspaper cartoons. A bad art student in Chicago, he went on to Paris, where he speedily absorbed and copied all the latest French fads. Six War-time months in the U.S. Navy knocked French Impressionism out of him." A surveyor in the mining district, a sailor, and a bad art student who rejected foreign forms of art, Benton was about as manly an artist as an artist could be. By comparison, Curry's gender presentation received far less attention, but *Time* did note that this "simple and dramatic" painter, despite now being "apple-cheeked, fat, and bald," was once "a potent footballer."²⁶

26. "U.S. Scene," *Time*, 12/24/1934, 26–31.

Grant Wood was no footballer. He was a soldier during World War I, but *Time* neglected to mention that, perhaps because he never saw Europe and spent most of his time in the army recovering from appendicitis and sketching portraits of fellow soldiers – “doughboys 25 cents, officers \$1.”²⁷ *The Baltimore Sun*, in its 1935 write-up on Wood, saw the artist’s “queer experience” in the army – his illness, artistic ventures, and lack of deployment – as a launching pad for his artistic career. “From a shy boy, wistful to be liked, he became popular,” art critic Frederic Newlin Price wrote, “for by some strange reaction his drawings won folk to him. . . . The bashful boy, who had wept when asked to read in school, had found his entrée into life.” *Time* magazine echoed Price’s characterization of Wood as shy and bashful, intimating a kind of softness or even weakness, when it labeled the “chubby, soft-spoken Wood” as Regionalism’s “chief philosopher and greatest teacher.” In contrast to its emphasis on Benton’s virility and Curry’s gridiron achievements, the magazine noted that “shy Bachelor Wood, 42, hates to leave his native Iowa where his fellow-citizens have been buying his pictures and singing his praise almost since he began painting.”²⁸

Wood may have found his calling as an artist while in the army, but most renditions of his life story, including his own well-rehearsed version, held that it was his interwar trips to Europe that eventually led him to his mature painting style and fame as a Regionalist artist. His first trips to Europe, however, did nothing to challenge the stereotypes of bohemian artists. “He raised a pink beard,” the *Des Moines Register* wrote after Wood’s death, “dressed in traditional Bohemian fashion, and turned out many Europe-influenced paintings, most of them forgotten.”²⁹ As Evans shows, *bohemian* was one of those words – similar to *gay* – that held seemingly boundless allusions to improper sexuality,

27. This story was told in detail by the *Baltimore Sun* in 1935, but passed over quickly by R. Tripp Evans. Following Wood’s sister, Nan Wood Graham, Evans suggests that Wood was in the hospital with appendicitis and not, as the *Sun* tells it, because of “an anthrax plague through an epidemic of the ‘flu.’” I’ve chosen to follow Evans here. Frederic Newlin Price, “The Making of an Artist: The Americanism of Grant Wood,” *Baltimore Sun*, 1/20/1935; Evans, *Grant Wood*, 38.

28. Price, “The Making of an Artist”; “U.S. Scene.”

29. “Final Tributes to Grant Wood,” *Des Moines Register*, 2/15/1942.

to queerness. Moreover, he notes, by the 1920s beards “had evolved from a sign of manliness to a suspect, and nearly opposite, meaning.”³⁰ And then of course there was the odd color of the thing—identified as pink, a color that, along with lavender, had long been associated with effeminacy and homosexuality.³¹

Shortly after returning to Cedar Rapids, Wood was convinced to shave off his pink beard (which, of course, was really red). In the narrative of Wood’s artistic discovery of his midwestern roots, this act came to symbolize his rejection of European schools of painting in favor of the mature, hard-edged style and local subjects that made him famous.³² Although Wood dropped the bohemian beard and eschewed Impressionist styles, the earlier characterizations of his queerness stuck.

Echoing both *Time’s* emphasis on Wood’s “bachelor” status and the *Register’s* use of the color pink, writer MacKinlay Kantor painted a decidedly queer image of Wood after visiting the artist’s Cedar Rapids studio at Five Turner Alley.

Grant Wood is a bachelor, and lives with a quiet, sweet faced woman who is his mother. . . . He has a disappearing cupboard, disappearing dining table and disappearing bed. Everything but the bathtub is apt to disappear at a moment’s notice. . . . Pink of face and plump of figure, Iowa’s most famous artist calls forth the mental adjective “cherubic,” “seraphic” and all the rest. Perhaps he was most nearly in character one night when he appeared at a costume party dressed as an angel—wings, pink flannel nightie, pink toes and even a halo supported by a stick thrusting up from his back.³³

Here again we see Wood in pink—specifically a “pink flannel nightie”—but this time as an angel rather than a bohemian. And not a masculine warrior like the angel St. Michael, but a sweet, chubby, feminized, asexual cherub of classic paintings or Valentine’s Day greeting cards. Additionally, Wood’s bachelor status was not only named but reinforced by his mother, sitting quietly in the corner almost as if a piece of furniture. While it was not

30. Evans, *Grant Wood*, 46–47.

31. Wayne Dynes, *Homolexis: A Historical and Cultural Lexicon of Homosexuality* (New York, 1985), 33; H. Max, *Gay(s)Language: A Dic(k)tionary of Gay Slang* (Austin, TX, 1988).

32. Evans, *Grant Wood*, 47.

33. MacKinlay Kantor, “K’s Column,” *Des Moines Tribune-Capital*, 12/20/1930.

unusual, in this era before Social Security, for elderly parents – especially widows – to live with their children, Kantor’s emphasis on Wood’s bachelorhood makes her inclusion seem meaningful. Moreover, Kantor combined these descriptions of Wood with the unique, disappearing elements of the studio’s décor. While these elements were important and inventive space-saving strategies Wood used in his tiny studio apartment, Kantor’s highlighting of the strategies might also be meant to suggest – along with Wood’s bachelor status, his pink angel costume, and the stoic presence of his mother – that Wood’s life contained secretive elements meant to be concealed, though not repressed or disavowed.³⁴

Wood’s cupboard, dining table, and bed – like his queerness – may have been concealed, but Kantor knew they were there and shared this only partially hidden fact with his readers. Indeed, the secret of Wood’s queerness, up through the 1930s at least, was really no secret at all – nor did it seem to pose much of a threat, as Wood often adopted the language of feigned ignorance to describe himself. For those who could read through the thinly veiled allusions used to characterize Wood and artists like him, the “primrose path” of queer artists was fully visible in and through the “lavender language” used to describe them.³⁵ More to the point, this lavender language – by naming queerness implicitly but explicitly disavowing it – worked to create space for queer individuals in the small towns and rural spaces where they were generally thought not to exist. That is how Wood was able to make his home and find his greatest support in Cedar Rapids. That was also how Harlan Miller was so easily able to fit a misfit group of artists so snugly in amid the pastoral landscape of Stone City. And that is one way the pastoral setting of Stone City, for the bachelor Wood at least, served as a queer respite from the more heteronormative demands on him back in Cedar Rapids.

34. For a different reading of this passage, see Evans, *Grant Wood*, 60.

35. This reference to Wood traveling a primrose path comes from a 1935 *North American Review* article examining Wood’s work: “By his own confession, Wood has been too much entranced by the prim patterns on old china. In his landscape, sometimes, he prettifies the Iowa fields, diluting their abundant fertility to tea-cup graciousness. . . . Wood, I think, will fight out of this primrose path.” Ruth Pickering, “Grant Wood, Painter in Overalls,” *North American Review* 20 (September 1935), 271–77.

Otherness and Pastoral Possibilities at Stone City

On its face, a run-down, nearly depopulated, nineteenth-century industrial boom town hardly strikes one as a promising and powerful pastoral setting. For two summers, however, it was the space where Grant Wood came closest to realizing his vision of a Regionalist art movement and where he was most removed from the pressures of heteronormative society he likely felt back in Cedar Rapids. In Stone City, Wood was able to look past the largely abandoned limestone quarries and uninhabited buildings to envision the pastoral possibilities of the tiny village. According to art historian James Dennis, Wood's vision of Stone City—or his painterly vision of it, at least—embodied much of what historian Leo Marx identified as the conflicted and contradictory nature of American pastoralism. For Marx, American pastoralism was symbolized by, among other things, the Jeffersonian yeoman farmer as he existed in a “middle landscape” between wilderness and an industrialized society.³⁶

Wood's rendition of the colony's home, simply titled *Stone City*, captures the myth of the middle landscape. The farmscapes of the town and surrounding area dominate the few markers of industrialism Wood provided. The large limestone quarry, for instance, which Wood placed prominently near the center of the piece, appears as an almost natural feature of the landscape, were it not for the terraced steps leading from the river to a well-hidden crane, its uppermost spires barely emerging above a dense tree line. To the far right of the frame Wood playfully added a water tower, although he omitted one of the most powerful symbols of American industrialism—the railroad—which the tower would have served. Additionally, despite the absence of modern vehicles (the winding road that traces across the painting is traversed by just a single horse and its rider), Wood placed two modern billboards at the roadside. Accenting the already sensuous curves of Wood's landscape, one of these billboards was charged—for the select viewers who could read such coded symbols—with erotic

36. James M. Dennis, *Grant Wood: A Study in American Art and Culture* (Columbia, MO, 1986), esp. chap. 11, “Cultural Tradition: The Machine in the Garden,” 212–15; Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York, 1964).



Grant Wood, Stone City, 1930. Art © Figge Art Museum, successors to the Estate of Nan Wood Graham/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.

meaning: the billboard facing the painting's audience displays the faint image of a man in a red tie—a 1930s urban sartorial code for male homosexuality—smoking a cigarette, with copy that suggestively reads: "They Satisfy."³⁷

In Wood's vision, then, Stone City was a distinctly pastoral place in the American sense: a middle landscape where agrarian mythology and modern industrialism were mixed, and where—for Wood, at least—the latter could be easily subdued and playfully twisted, sometimes in queer ways. In Wood's rendering of Stone City, in other words, the artist could feign a certain degree

37. The sensual—even sexual—curves of Wood's landscapes have been noted by several scholars. See, for example, Wanda Corn, *Grant Wood: The Regionalist Vision* (New Haven, 1983), 90. R. Tripp Evans, however, is the only scholar to suggest that—given Wood's queerness—we should read these curves as evoking a male-male, same-sex eroticism. For a specific discussion of *Stone City* in this context, see Evans, *Grant Wood*, 131–35. On the red necktie as a symbol of urban male homosexuality, see Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 52; and Evans, *Grant Wood*, 136.

of ignorance regarding the incursions of industrial capitalism and its deleterious effects on modern life.

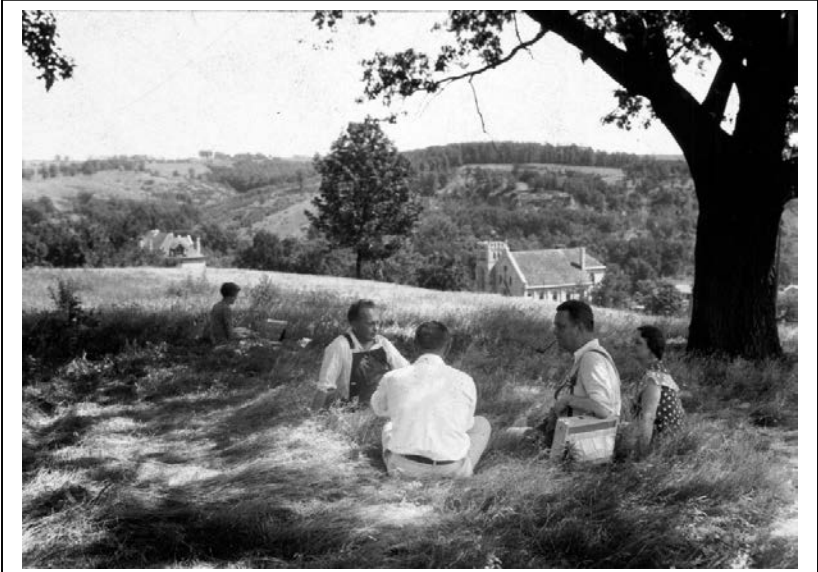
This feigned ignorance—or at least the appearance and portrayal of it—extended to the Stone City colony as well. Much like Miller’s description of art as the “business of the soul,” the *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, which devoted significant ink and space to Wood’s venture, saw the Stone City colony as combating the effects of the depression by, for the most part, ignoring it. In its announcement of the colony’s opening in late June 1932, for example, the *Gazette* proclaimed,

From the jovial appearance of the faculty one would surmise that here is at least one group in Iowa who is not taking the depression too seriously. At any rate, they are not depressed. But then artists have never been known to be worried about stocks and bonds. Their philosophy of art as a motivating power of life and happiness has stood them in good stead since they have put over a big proposition in times which would have baffled many an able business man.³⁸

Cedar Rapids Gazette columnist Adeline Taylor, who penned several lengthy, glowing pieces on the colony and its participants, also claimed that there was “No Talk of Depression” among the colonists, as art and the pastoral scenery served as a reinvigorating diversion. “There is the same fresh spontaneity among the students as there is about the gorgeous scenery in those hills,” she wrote. “No talk of deflated incomes—money is neither thought nor talked of. There is something else to think of than the dollar sign out there among high reaching bluffs and timbered hills.”³⁹ For journalists like Taylor, the pastoral setting of the Stone City colony created a space somehow separate and distinct from the surrounding towns, villages, and farms suffering under the weight of the Great Depression. For these writers, the presence of the artists and their colony created a space apart, a haven and a respite from the surrounding world and its concerns—economic or otherwise.

38. “Stone City Art Colony Will Be Opened Today: Its Enrollment Has Exceeded All Expectations,” *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, 6/26/1932.

39. Taylor, “Picturesque Stone City Given New Life.”



Grant Wood "talking it over" with members of the Stone City Art Colony, ca. 1932. Unidentified photographer, Edward Beatty Rowan Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

The pastoral scene of the Stone City colony was also, in many ways, portrayed as a place out of time. Much of the press coverage envisioned the colony as the rebirth of Stone City. One headline from columnist Taylor, for example, proclaimed, "Stone City Given New Life by Enthusiastic Art Colony"; a similar article was capped with the opening, "City of the Dead Comes to Life Again."⁴⁰ Drawing on themes of rebirth, these articles evoked what the scholar Raymond Williams, in his famous text on the pastoral in literature and social history, called the Golden Age.⁴¹ This, in the pastoral tradition of English literature, was an imagined historical moment free of strife and void of conflict. In 1932, for the *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, the nineteenth-century Golden Age of Stone City was almost positively Edenic – that is, until the arrival of a serpent in the form of cheaper Portland cement:

40. *Ibid.*; Miller "Stone City."

41. Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York, 1973), esp. chaps. 1–4.

And so it came to pass that from 1850 until 1894 money and dreams worked in perfect accord, and the sun shone brightly on a community which numbered some seven hundred inhabitants. But a great storm broke in 1893, in the way of the introduction of Portland cement, and it violently shook the stone foundation on which Stone City rested. From that day to this, it has been almost a deserted village, the workmen long since gone and the bleating of sheep almost the only sound to be heard.⁴²

The vast majority of earlier Stone City residents—those who actually labored in the quarries—likely never saw “money and dreams” work in “perfect accord.” Workers at one quarry, in fact, went out on strike in 1890, demanding \$1.70 per day and putting up “a stubborn fight.”⁴³ But within the pastoral tradition, it is the function of the Golden Age to erase, to ignore, or at least to feign ignorance of such conflict.

Crucially, some poets and artists see it as their job to keep the mythical Golden Age alive. *Des Moines Register* reporter Robert Cron understood this role of the artist. “There is vivid history written in the steep hillsides and stone walls of Stone City,” he wrote, “history that was all but forgotten, but which the artists’ colony hopes to revive. . . . Now Iowa artists hope to glorify the section, to paint the pathos and glory that was once Stone City.”⁴⁴ This was the essence of what Wood saw as the primary goal of Regionalism and the Stone City colony: to work towards a “national expression,” a distinctively American form of art, and not one that functioned as “a mere reflection of [European] cultural expression.”⁴⁵ To accomplish this, Wood hoped to cultivate a series of regional art centers that would engage directly with the

42. Grace Boston, “Stone City Is Ideal Setting for Colony and Art School Planned by Cedar Rapids Artists,” *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, 5/15/1932.

43. “Miscellaneous Labor News: Quarrymen at Anamosa, Ia., Demand an Increase in Wages,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 5/2/1890.

44. Cron, “Iowa Artists Club Forms Art Colony.”

45. These statements appeared in the colony’s mission statement, titled “Aim of the Colony,” which was printed in a pamphlet used to attract artists to Stone City. *Stone City Colony and Art School*, 1933, folder 1, box 6, Grant Wood Papers (also accessible at www.aaa.si.edu/collections/grant-wood-collection-9365). As numerous scholars have pointed out, the irony of this central goal of Regionalism was, for Wood at least, still heavily indebted to European techniques and styles. The rhetoric of Regionalism erased and ignored that indebtedness. See especially Brandy M. Roberts, “The European Roots of Regionalism: Grant Wood’s

local landscape and immediate environment as each center gradually developed its own regional style. Stone City, then, was intended to be just the beginning and the model for other regional centers. As the colony's mission statement posited, "An American art will arrive through the fusion of various regional expressions based on a thorough analysis of what is significant to these regions. Stone City Colony has this for its objective."⁴⁶

Not only journalists, but also art school educators and critics as well, shared this enthusiastic vision. In the weeks before the colony's first season, for example, the *Cedar Rapids Gazette* quoted the Chicago lecturer and critic Dudley Crafts Watson as proclaiming, "The great age of machinery has done its worst and its best for us. We are emancipated, the whole race has freedom, and with that freedom comes despair, depression, and total indolence unless we develop our talent. The colony should grow in two or three years into a great, splendid, flourishing thing, more important than Chautauqua has been in the east, more important than most summer colleges."⁴⁷ Stone City, then—"The Quarry Town That Came to Life Again as an Art Center"—was to be the model for a nationwide art movement, an American Renaissance that would help alleviate the effects of European dominance in art and begin to heal the wounds of the Great Depression by breathing new life into a mythical American landscape gasping for breath.⁴⁸

As journalists' emphasis on Stone City's Golden Age and its artistic resuscitation illustrates, this mythical American landscape was one that was not only spatially but also temporally outside the normal workaday world. Crucially, it was the otherness of the space of Stone City and its art colony that offered the potential of safe harbor to a variety of outsiders: artists, queer folks, and, according to journalists, even ghosts, the long-dead inhabitants of the Golden Age. Although a handful of residents remained in

Stylistic Synthesis," *Grant Wood: An American Master Revealed* (Davenport and San Francisco, 1995).

46. "Aim of the Colony."

47. "Art Institute Lecturer Favorably Impressed by Stone City Art Project," *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, 6/5/1932.

48. "The Quarry Town That Came to Life Again as an Art Center," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 8/13/1933.

Stone City in 1932, the village was often portrayed as “deserted” and devoid of human life.⁴⁹ Harkening back to the ancient pastoral poetry of Virgil and others, for example, Robert Cron suggested that the “verdant” hills of Stone City were “cropped short by grazing sheep, the only animal hardy enough to munch a living from them”; apparently unshepherded, the sheep commingled not only with the colonists, but with the undead, as the colony’s artists “started ghosts walking in Stone City.”⁵⁰

Wood’s first biographer, the Iowa journalist Darrell Garwood, evoked the spectral nature of Stone City when he described what was so unique about the place that Wood chose for his colony. In Stone City, according to Garwood, the land itself was uniquely separate and distinct from the landscape that surrounded it. That separateness echoed pastoral notions of rest and respite, but it also signaled the possibility of a fresh perspective, a different sort of vision, a different way of living.

For some reason the limestone that lies in tilted beds under Iowa’s soil came to the surface around Stone City. It pushed up the ground in a series of hills and ridges. The Wapsipinicon has cut a deep valley through them, and it ducks under trees that grow out of the steep banks and almost meet overhead. There is relief in this stony section, after so much rolling land all around. It is a place for ghosts to hide out, for small boys to explore caves under limestone ledges and for artists to find how feverish the usually complacent lines of the Iowa landscape can become.⁵¹

Stone City, for Garwood, was a place of “relief,” both in the topographical sense and in the ability of ghosts, young boys, and artists to get away, to remove themselves from unwanted and undesirable situations. Whether those situations were death, overbearing parents, or heteronormative demands, Stone City, for Garwood, was both a space and a time apart from the surrounding Iowa landscape and, as such, was a space perfect for Wood’s art colony.

49. On the characterization of Stone City as “deserted,” see Boston, “Stone City Is Ideal Setting”; Cron, “Iowa Artists Club Forms Art Colony”; and “Stone City Art Colony Opens with 100 Students Enrolled,” *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, 6/27/1933.

50. Cron, “Iowa Artists Club Forms Art Colony.” On the theme of ghosts and rebirth, see also Adeline Taylor, “Columbia Hall, Hotel and Theater Building at Stone City May Be Revived by Art Colony,” *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, 7/3/1932.

51. Darrell Garwood, *Artist in Iowa: A Life of Grant Wood* (New York, 1944), 143.

The Stone City Art Colony and School was not Wood's first attempt to create a distinct and separate artistic space in his home state. Back in Cedar Rapids in the mid-1920s, Wood and a group of artists in the city had wanted to create an urban art colony centered on Wood's studio at Five Turner Alley. The colony never materialized, partly because of the excessive costs associated with converting the nearby buildings into studios but also because residents were anxious about the queer possibilities of a "Greenwich Village of the Corn Belt" in the heart of Cedar Rapids.⁵² But outside of the city, in the pastoral landscape of Stone City, the artists were able to find their place *as* outsiders. There—on the outskirts of the village, tucked into the hillsides—the artists of the Stone City Art Colony and School could find a place for themselves apart from the economic realities of the depression and, for some, outside of dominant and heteronormative institutions.

The otherness of the Stone City colony was expressed in many ways, but most notably in the journalistic obsession with the ice wagon homes of some of the colonists and the living arrangements and private lives of the artists more generally. Taylor's early coverage of the colony, for example, likely served as the model for the *Christian Science Monitor* headline, as she was the first to describe the wagons as "painted in gay colors and dressed up in grand designs like a gypsy caravan." In subsequent articles on the colony, she wrote about the "ice-wagon vagabonds" and devoted an entire column to her visit to one of the more "interesting" abodes in the "Exclusive Wagon Row": Reggie Correthers's "Bohemian carnival home."⁵³ Edward Rowan, a fellow colonist who ran the Little Gallery in Cedar Rapids and promoted Wood's work, also picked up on this characterization of the "romantic" wagon encampment. "A touch of the gypsy is there," he observed, "a note of old Bohemia and the bizarre of nomadic life."⁵⁴ This framing of the ice wagons as gypsy-like, bohemian, carnivalesque,

52. Evans, *Grant Wood*, 58.

53. Taylor, "Picturesque Stone City Given New Life"; idem, "Columbia Hall"; idem, "We Go Calling in Exclusive Ice Wagon Row at Stone City and Hear Tales from Reggie," *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, 7/17/1932.

54. Edward B. Rowan, "Old Ice Wagons, From Which Girl Once Helped Herself, Aid in Realization of Artist Career," *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, 7/3/1932.



Wagons at the artist camp at the Stone City Art Colony. Unidentified photographer, Grant Wood Collection, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

and the like worked to emphasize the difference — the otherness — of the artists and their colony. So too, did journalists' concern with the appearance and dress of the artists themselves.

When Taylor spent the afternoon with Reggie Correthers, for example, she noted his artist's smock before sharing the fantastic tales with which Correthers regaled her. "Attired in his bright blue smock," she wrote, "'Reggie' is the perfect host, pouring tea and tales for his guests — tales of designing opera sets for Melba in Australia, making stage costumes for the London court designers, fixing up feathered things for the beautiful Gaby Deslys, exploring Hawaiian volcanoes with a noted geologist, getting tattooed with Jack London and losing himself in the Fiji Islands."⁵⁵ If Correthers's wagon and smock were not enough to mark his difference, then certainly his globe-trotting stories highlighted his otherness in bold.

Taylor similarly invoked dress as difference when she wondered "what the inhabitants of [Stone City] think of the invasion by these art students, who — dressed in smocks, overalls, riding

⁵⁵, Taylor, "We Go Calling."

breeches, pajamas and aprons – can be spotted any time during the day with their easels set up here and there on the hillside.”⁵⁶ In this portrait, the village inhabitants were separated from the invading colonists explicitly by distance – artists atop the hill, locals in the valley – and implicitly by dress. In a slightly different vein, the *St. Louis Dispatch*, in its coverage of the colony, noted that the clothing of the artists was surprisingly not all that different from regular folks. “Grant Wood works in overalls,” according to the *Dispatch*, “and the rest of the men wear quite nondescript clothes. The women also avoid the freakish and bizarre in attire. One girl goes about in shorts and another wears khaki trousers; the rest are satisfied with conservative skirts. Only one beret and smock were in evidence the other day, and there wasn’t a Van Dyke beard on the place.”⁵⁷ Regardless of whether or not the artists of the Stone City colony actually appeared any different than their neighbors in the village below, the point is that – like the heightened interest in the ice wagons – the concern with clothing on the part of journalists spoke to the understanding of the colony and its inhabitants as other, as odd, and as potentially queer.

While journalists used ice wagons and clothing as a way to articulate the otherness of the colony residents, they simultaneously suggested that Stone City’s pastoral setting was the ideal place for that difference to reside. After a *Cedar Rapids Gazette* reporter visited Stone City in the spring of 1933, for example, the paper devoted an entire article to the colony’s director, Adrian Dornbush, and his acquisition of a house in the village. Dornbush had been a longtime resident of Cedar Rapids and an instructor at Rowan’s Little Gallery and was a friend and supporter of Wood. He was also openly homosexual.⁵⁸ The *Gazette* omitted explicit mention of his homosexuality, but it implied as much when it described Dornbush as having an “artistic soul,” a predisposition that served him well in refurbishing the abandoned house he shared with his male “cohort” Kelly Greenwell. Crucially, for the *Gazette*, that rundown structure located in Stone City’s pastoral

56. Taylor, “Picturesque Stone City Given New Life.”

57. “The Quarry Town that Came to Life Again.” On this issue of dress at the Stone City colony, also see Evans, *Grant Wood*, 151.

58. Evans, *Grant Wood*, 151.

setting was the “Ideal Home” for these queer men and their “menagerie” of animals, which included a blacksnake the couple had spared in their renovations and was, the paper suggestively noted, “beginning to accept . . . as one of the family.” Echoing earlier Edenic portrayals of Stone City’s Golden Age, the *Gazette* closed its feature on Dornbush by noting, “It seems as if [the artist] must have found paradise—complete even to the snake.”⁵⁹ For the odd, the different, and the queer, then, the Stone City colony and its pastoral environs were the place to be. A place apart both spatially and temporally, the Stone City colony had the potential to safely harbor those who were other.

This is not to suggest—as other scholars have—that the Stone City colony was a space of heightened homosexual sex or romance.⁶⁰ No documentation exists to support such a claim. But neither does evidence exist to suggest that there was any less sex—queer or otherwise—happening in Stone City than elsewhere at that time. Stone City was not a place where queer people like Wood went to “hide,” to somehow “butch up” or otherwise invigorate their art with masculinity by going back to the land.⁶¹ Instead, to note the queerness of the pastoral space of Stone City—its spatial and temporal otherness—is simply to suggest that this was a space where queer people could exist, albeit temporarily, outside of dominant institutions, a space that was made safe for queer individuals.⁶²

For artists like Wood, Dornbush, and others, Stone City was a sanctuary from demands such as marriage, the rearing of a family, and everything that came with heterosexual domesticity—elements of a “normal” life in which Wood seemed largely uninterested. Wood’s bachelorhood was widely commented upon

59. All quoted material in the paragraph comes from “Artist Finds Ideal Home in Deserted Stone City House,” *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, 6/11/1933.

60. Seery, “Grant Wood’s Political Gothic.”

61. Evans, *Grant Wood*, 151–56.

62. Queer studies scholar Henry Abelove, for example, suggests that pastoral narratives often highlight the value of, and call for, queer lives lived outside of heteronormative dictates of “domesticity, romantic love and marriage, and the white bourgeois family.” Henry Abelove, “From Thoreau to Queer Politics,” in *Deep Gossip* (Minneapolis, 2003). On rural space as queer safe space, see David Bell and Gill Valentine, “Queer Country: Rural Lesbian and Gay Lives,” *Journal of Rural Studies* 11 (1995), 113–22.

by journalists and others in the 1930s. Within the discourse of feigned ignorance, his long-lived bachelorhood decidedly signaled queerness, especially when combined with his close relationship with his mother, with whom he would live until her death in 1935. Wood often proclaimed that he would never marry while his mother was alive and under his care – this even though as a young man “Wood’s own marriage prospects . . . were as good as any young man’s in Cedar Rapids.”⁶³ Likewise, Garwood noted that “plenty of girls would have liked to keep house for him, but Grant didn’t follow up his opportunities.” Wood was reported to have confided in a close friend, “I guess I’m just not that interested in women.”⁶⁴ Wood’s unmarried status seems to have been generally accepted by his friends and supporters, but the repeated references to his bachelorhood were surely a weighty reminder that, as an unwed artist sharing a studio with his widowed mother, he struck a rather – if tacitly accepted – queer figure.

In Stone City, however, Wood’s marital status could fade into the background. Wood was well set in his bachelorhood – and already in his early forties – by the time of the Stone City colony. Nonetheless, the pressure was still there, and the colony of artists nestled in the pastoral landscape of Stone City allowed the artist to remove himself from the heteronormative demands of life in Cedar Rapids. At the margins of an industrialized world, Wood could take his place among like-minded individuals as shepherd of his artistic flock.

Pastoral Possibilities Crumble in Iowa City

Like most good things, the Stone City Art Colony and School was not to last. Financial difficulties, coupled with employment opportunities for Wood elsewhere, spelled the end of the colony experiment after only two summers. Despite Harlan Miller’s proclamation that art at Stone City was the business of the soul, there

63. Evans, *Grant Wood*, 36–37.

64. Garwood, *Artist in Iowa*, 91. Garwood’s biography was not an academic study and, as Kristy Raine has described it, tended at times to be rather “gossipy.” Wood’s sister, Nan Wood Graham, took particular issue with Garwood’s portrayal of Wood as uninterested in women. Kristy Raine, e-mail message to author, 7/15/2014; Evans, *Grant Wood*, 300, 375.

were still debts to be paid. The tuition and room and board collected from students fell far short of paying the colony's outstanding bills, and the colony ended its 1933 session in debt by almost \$1,500.⁶⁵ Ultimately, with the help of a grant from the Carnegie Corporation—a grant originally meant for the colony's purchase of the Green estate in 1933—and the personal wealth of one of Wood's friends, John C. Reid, the debts were eventually settled a year later.⁶⁶ The debts themselves, however, were not enough to sink the colony.

The death blow came during the winter of 1933–34, when Wood was persuaded by his mother and David Turner to accept a position as director of Iowa's Public Works of Art Project overseeing the completion of a set of murals at the Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts (now Iowa State University) in Ames. According to Wood's biographers, David Turner—at the behest of Wood's mother, Hattie—threatened to evict Wood from Five Turner Alley if he refused to give up the venture at Stone City, which, from a business perspective, was a failure.⁶⁷ Later that year, as an offshoot of his PWAP work, Wood would also accept a position as a lecturer in the Department of Graphic and Plastic Arts at the University of Iowa and move with his mother from Cedar Rapids to Iowa City.⁶⁸ The dreams of Stone City were now ghosts themselves, and Wood had exited the marginal, queer realm of freelance artists and entered the thoroughly bureaucratized and normative institutions of the state and federal government and academe.

As part of this major shift toward normative institutions, Wood did something that surprised everyone: he got married. In March 1935, as his mother's health began to fade following the move to Iowa City, Wood—just shy of 45 years old—married the

65. The \$1,500 debt in 1933 would be equivalent to approximately \$27,400 in 2015. www.measuringworth.com/uscompare.

66. The colony's debts were fully paid sometime in the fall of 1934. For details regarding the debts and their payments, see John C. Reid to Frederick P. Keppel, Carnegie Corporation, 7/23/1934; John C. Reid to Robert M. Lester, Carnegie Corporation, 7/31/1934; Robert M. Lester to John C. Reid, 8/6/1934; and John C. Reid to unknown, 9/11/1934, all in folder 2, box 1, John C. Reid Papers.

67. Garwood, *Artist in Iowa*, 162–63; Evans, *Grant Wood*, 165–67.

68. Walter A. Jessup (University of Iowa president) to Grant Wood, 1/1/1934, folder 3, box 6, Grant Wood Papers.

singer, actress, and divorcée Sara Sherman Maxon.⁶⁹ Announcing the nuptials, Wood's local paper, the *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, noted, "So busy have press and the public been, watching Grant Wood's meteoric rise to fame, they failed to sense the importance the past year of first signs of his digression from single-track bachelor-dom. [The attention of the press] was so far removed from the thought of romance as to make the culmination of this courtship a major surprise."⁷⁰ Surprise as it was, Wood's marriage, which was never a happy one and ended in divorce in 1939, brought Wood (even more fully than his academic position) into the mainstream and made the queer pastoral possibilities of Stone City seem like a lost dream.

This is not to say that Wood had given up on the Regionalist vision he had established at the Stone City colony. Wood's vision of a communal, Regionalist art movement persisted – only now it had gained the legitimacy of the state and academe and shifted landscapes from the hills of Stone City to the halls of the University of Iowa. In addition to the mural work Wood oversaw, he also held a series of art "clinics" at the university. Both activities were explicitly seen as outgrowths of Wood's time at Stone City.⁷¹ Wood also continued to call for the development of regional art centers, which he often compared to medieval cities competing over the construction of gothic cathedrals.⁷²

As the *Daily Iowan* suggested, however, there were pitfalls to such an approach. "There is a danger in this, of course," the paper reported, "danger that hundreds of miniature Grant Woods will spring up."⁷³ [Wood] himself recognized this and expressed

69. Evans, *Grant Wood*, 205.

70. "Grant Wood and Sara Sherman Maxon to Be Married Tonight in Minneapolis," *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, 3/2/1935.

71. See "Professor Wood Spreads the Gospel," *Daily Iowan*, 10/14/1934; "Grant Wood, Clinician – His Patients: Artists; His Operations: On Pictures!" *Daily Iowan*, 10/30/1934; "Grant Wood Helps Young Artists Develop Technique," *Daily Iowan*, 11/3/1935; "G. Wood Has Third Clinic," *Daily Iowan*, 11/16/1935.

72. Tom Yoseloff, "Grant Wood, Back from East, Has Plan for U.S. Financed Artists' Centers," *Daily Iowan*, undated, folder 1, box 1, Grant Wood Papers.

73. "Professor Wood Spreads the Gospel," *Daily Iowan*, 10/30/1934. For confirmation of this charge, see Breanne Robertson, "Politics in Paint: The Creation, Destruction, and Restoration of the Cedar Rapids Federal Courthouse Mural," *Annals of Iowa* 74 (2015), 263–313.

it when he said recently that modern art will soon formulate rules and become more dogmatic and academic than the early academic art which it supplanted."⁷⁴ Wood was perhaps already sensing the ground shifting beneath his feet, as his Regionalist projects—developed at the Stone City colony—began to clash with the very academic and dogmatic elements of modern art he hoped would curtail simple imitation.

Wood and his clinics may have been popular with the public and students, but the newly minted professor quickly ran up against artists and academics in his own department at the University of Iowa who were less than happy with their well-known colleague. Wood was convinced that his colleagues—most notably the department chair, Lester Longman—were simply jealous of his popular appeal, but Longman and others charged that Wood lacked artistic ability and was a domineering teacher. Moreover, and perhaps most threateningly, they also implied that he was a homosexual.⁷⁵

The conflict came about in large part because the modern art world's dalliance with Regionalism had largely ended by the 1940s as newer schools of art, such as Abstract Expressionism, began to take hold. Abstract Expressionism was, in part, a reaction against the Regionalists, who were now seen as too insular, too populist, and far too similar to the growth of fascism in Europe.⁷⁶ This development was largely anathema to Wood, who had grown famous disavowing abstraction in favor of realism, practice over theory, and the quotidian in lieu of the academic. Thus Wood, in the late 1930s and early 1940s, became the victim of a perfect storm. His art had suddenly ceased being fashionable among art critics, and his queerness, which earlier had often been nothing more than a humorous side note, had now become a serious liability and a source for potential blackmail.

One of the most remarkable things about that shift is the way the language around Wood's queerness changed. Where the

74. "Professor Wood Spreads the Gospel."

75. Joni L. Kinsey provides the most thorough overview of the Wood-Longman controversy. See, Kinsey, "Cultivating Iowa," 26–32.

76. See, for example, Lester Longman to George F. Kay (dean of the College of Liberal Arts), 12/9/1940, folder 4, box 6, Grant Wood Papers; and Evans, *Grant Wood*, 297.

newspaper coverage of Stone City was rife with tacit acknowledgment—with feigned ignorance—the bureaucratic stylings of academe rendered the artist’s queerness virtually silent in university correspondence. Many of the letters that circulated among Wood, Longman, their colleagues, university administrators, and outside parties survive, and they often speak to the “charges” leveled against Wood: that his paintings, with only a few exceptions, were not noteworthy; that his art was too illustrative; that he could not draw and relied on photography; that he made his students do most of his own work; and that he forced students to draw and paint like him.⁷⁷ Only a few, however, speak to Longman’s implied accusation of homosexuality, and when they do, they do so not through a rhetoric of feigned ignorance but through a discourse of shamed silence.

Longman, who was almost 20 years younger than Wood and academically trained in art history, first joined the University of Iowa art department in 1936. The feud between Wood and Longman simmered for several years before someone in the department leaked information about the ongoing conflict to *Time* magazine in 1940. As Joni Kinsey notes, the informant was most likely Fletcher Martin, the artist Longman handpicked to replace Wood while the latter was on sabbatical—a leave that university administrators granted in an effort to retain Wood and calm the departmental waters. Kinsey suggests, however, that Martin had been a member of the faculty for only a short while, “so most of his knowledge of Wood probably originated with Longman.”⁷⁸

With the litany of charges against Wood potentially going public (although *Time* never published the story), the debate came to a head, and the specter of Wood’s queerness lurked furtively at the edges. In a letter to the dean of the College of Liberal Arts, for example, Longman lamented what he saw as Wood’s very unacademic publicity machine, which included a live-in agent and—as Longman pointed out parenthetically—a Jewish sales promoter. “Wood himself prepares and promotes the high

77. For an overview of the controversy, including the list of “charges,” see Dean George F. Kay’s “Notes made in relation to conference in my office with regard to members of the staff of instruction of the Department of Art,” folder 4, box 6, Grant Wood Papers.

78. Kinsey, “Cultivating Iowa,” 29.

powered publicity campaign through a local agent who lives in his house," he wrote to his dean in December 1940, "as well as in conjunction with the leading (Jewish) art sales promoter in New York."⁷⁹ The publicity agent was Park Rinard, who indeed had moved into Wood's house following the artist's divorce and who acted as Wood's secretary, although the accusations clearly implied that the men cohabitated on more than a professional level.⁸⁰

Although the charge of homosexuality was likely easily read into comments like these, it was—at least in the surviving documentation—never explicitly made. As art historian Joni Kinsey notes, the only extant documentation of the departmental crisis that explicitly used the term *homosexual* comes from a 1941 memo detailing a meeting that included Rinard, university president Virgil Hancher, and others.⁸¹ "Comment had been made," the memo reads, "on the 'strange relationship between Mr. Wood and his publicity agent,' an inference and intimation indicating that Grant Wood was a homosexual and that Park Rinard was involved."⁸² Such explicit language, however, was the exception in this conflict. Gone, too, was the more relaxed and playful discourse seen at Stone City; silence was the order of the day in Iowa City.

With Longman's accusations—implied or otherwise—potentially going public, Wood threatened to resign. As a result, the university scrambled to retain its best-known artist. Rinard went to work as well, marshalling support from Wood's friends back in Cedar Rapids. In a letter to John C. Reid, who was now a member of the state board of education, which oversaw the state universities, Rinard signaled—through Wood's silence on the matter—that the controversy was more intense, and more personal, than an academic debate over painting techniques or artistic ability. Rinard wrote that the controversy was "a subject so close and so personal to Grant that it would be difficult for him to speak to you about it."⁸³ Indeed, when Wood did speak about it, he hinted

79. Lester Longman to Dean George F. Kay, 12/9/1940, folder 4, box 6, Grant Wood Papers.

80. Evans, *Grant Wood*, 275, 282.

81. Kinsey, "Cultivating Iowa," 29.

82. Notes of meeting with President Virgil Hancher, Park Rinard, and Dan Dutcher, 5/8/1941, folder 5, box 6, Grant Wood Papers.

83. Park Rinard to John C. Reid, 3/14/1941, folder 1, box 1, John C. Reid Papers.

at similar, more intimate, attacks that went beyond departmental politics. In a letter to university president Virgil Hancher, Wood declared, "The matter of vindication . . . extends beyond the university and crucially concerns my reputation as an artist and my personal character."⁸⁴

Reid echoed those sentiments, as well as the silence, when he came to Wood's defense. Previously, Reid had always portrayed the artist – with perhaps a touch of hyperbole – as "every inch a man and entirely free of the vices that usually go with men of his profession. He is wholesome, red blooded and a man's man from every standpoint." In letters to President Hancher regarding the departmental crisis, Reid similarly did not mince words when he characterized the infighting as "fantastic, unreal and neurotically childish." He urged President Hancher to either demote or fire Longman and warned of "the repugnance that would be felt by practically every fair-minded, intelligent person outside of the University, if the dastardly attack on Grant Wood were fully exposed to the people of the State."⁸⁵ For Reid, Rinard, and Wood, the conflict clearly went beyond professional matters of art and academics. Moreover, unlike during the years spent in Cedar Rapids and Stone City, feigned ignorance could not solve the conflict; silencing Longman was, for these men, the solution.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the conflict between Wood and Longman was never resolved – at least not in any satisfactory way. The university retained Longman as chair of the department and, rather than accepting Wood's resignation, offered him a year-long sabbatical. Wood returned to the university in the fall of 1941, only to discover that he was terminally ill. In February 1942 Wood died of pancreatic cancer at the University of Iowa hospital, with Park Rinard at his side.⁸⁶

84. Grant Wood to President Virgil Hancher, 6/18/1941, folder 3, box 1, John C. Reid Papers.

85. John C. Reid to Edward P. Schoentgen, 10/17/1933, folder 1, box 1, John C. Reid Papers; John C. Reid to President Virgil Hancher, 4/21/1941, *ibid.*; John C. Reid to President Virgil Hancher, 5/2/1941, *ibid.*

86. On Wood's diagnosis of pancreatic cancer (as opposed to liver cancer, which, before the reexamination of Wood's medical records in 1992, was thought to

The years Wood spent in Iowa City were difficult ones. He was removed from his former base of support in Cedar Rapids and even further removed from the queer pastoral possibilities of Stone City. Moreover, as the art world shifted beneath Wood's feet during the late 1930s and early 1940s, the queerness that was widely acknowledged but easily deflected and ignored, especially in the pastoral space of Stone City, became a dangerous liability.

After doctors discovered his cancer late in 1941, Wood again tried to resign from the university. Once again, the resignation was rejected, this time out of respect as much as self-interest. Temporarily ignoring Longman's accusations, the university issued a press release upon Wood's death in February 1942, proclaiming the departed as "an original and creative artist of unusual talent who in his all too short life made a superb contribution of permanent value."⁸⁷ Like the ghosts of Stone City, however, Wood's contribution to twentieth-century American art was quickly relegated to the shadows.

Interest in Grant Wood's art and life, however, has never been higher than in recent decades.⁸⁸ Yet outside of academic circles, the artist's queerness still largely remains an open secret. In many ways, that is fitting, as that was how Wood lived for most of his life. Given his last few years in Iowa City, however, there is some poetic justice in openly reclaiming Wood as a queer figure, in understanding not only how his queerness was reflected in and through his artwork, but also in articulating how his queerness was understood by those around him in various places and at various times. By more fully placing the queer figure of Wood within the history of his time at the Stone City Art Colony and School and at the University of Iowa, we are rewarded with a fuller, sharper, more defined picture of the artist's life — gay gypsy caravan and all.

have caused the artist's death), see Kinsey, "Cultivating Iowa," 31; and Evans, *Grant Wood*, 289. On Rinard's presence at Wood's deathbed, see Evans, *Grant Wood*, 292.

87. Grant Wood to Virgil M. Hancher, undated, folder 7, box 6, Grant Wood Papers; Earl E. Harper to Harry K. Newburn (Dean, College of Liberal Arts), 1/12/1942, folder 7, box 6, Grant Wood Papers; Eugene A. Gilmore, telegram to *Pittsburgh Press-Citizen*, 2/13/1942, folder 4, box 6, Grant Wood Papers.

88. On present-day adaptations of Wood's work, see Evans, *Grant Wood*, 8–9.

Book Reviews and Notices

Midwest Maize: How Corn Shaped the U.S. Heartland, by Cynthia Clampitt. Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2015. xii, 288 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$95.00 hardcover, \$19.95 paperback.

Reviewer Christopher Cumo is an independent scholar. He is the author of *Plants and People* (2015).

The study of corn has a vast literature. Traditionally, this topic is the purview of scientists, historians, economists, and archaeologists. With such an enormous and diverse literature, the importance of corn may be glimpsed only by a synthesis of the current state of knowledge. This is precisely the role *Midwest Maize* fills, and therein lies its value. To put the matter another way, Cynthia Clampitt offers no groundbreaking insights, but one would be mistaken to expect the breaking of new ground in a work that aims to bring together the insights from a variety of disciplines about a single topic, in this case corn. To be sure, the Midwest figures prominently in this book, but the treatment goes well beyond the confines of this region. The book introduces readers to corn from the basics of its botany to the rise of biotechnology. Clampitt is not a scientist by training but nonetheless handles the science of corn with clarity and skill. All the while she ventures into prehistory, history, and the social sciences, providing treatment that is exceptional in its breadth. Her method rests on secondary sources and aims to use history to create the context out of which Americans can meaningfully discuss the current problems of genetic engineering, biofuels, and what appears to be an impending Malthusian crisis.

This ambitious book is not easy to summarize. Clampitt characterizes it as a history, but much of the first chapter sinks roots into the prehistory of corn. From the outset she attempts to trace corn from its origins to the present in hopes of making clear why corn is so important to the United States. She ties the history of corn to the history of the Midwest and the rise of the Corn Belt. At the same time, she strides beyond the Midwest to demonstrate the relative rapidity with which the Columbian Exchange made corn a world crop. Throughout, her treatment of the structure and terminology of the corn plant, its parts, and the broad categories of corn is readable and easily accessible to non-scientists. As a food historian, Clampitt is passionate about the uses of

corn in the human diet, but she does not neglect the importance of corn in feeding livestock; in this sense we consume corn even when we eat a pork chop or a chicken breast. Clampitt traces the growth of the technology and science of corn, emphasizing such developments as the rise of the John Deere plow, the tractor, hybrid corn, no-till agriculture, and biotechnology. She traces the rise of meatpackers in Chicago within the context of the corn-livestock complex. She concludes with an even-handed assessment of the problems that beset humans within the context not merely of corn but of agriculture in general.

Midwest Maize deserves praise for its comprehensive treatment and readability. Non-scientists are the intended audience. Despite its excellence, a few details remain unclear. The book leaves readers to infer that American Indians were the first to create corn through purposeful breeding. Like so many agronomically important plants, corn has flowers, but only in the eighteenth century would European scientists understand that flowers are the reproductive structures of angiosperms. American Indians, therefore, could not have had any inkling of how to breed plants. Moreover, Clampitt follows conventional wisdom in attributing the invention of the seed drill to Jethro Tull, though she might have noted that ancient Egypt devised an important precursor. Covering the science of corn with great skill, Clampitt nonetheless omits the Southern Corn Leaf Blight in 1970 and 1971. In its own way that disaster confirmed the dangers of genetic uniformity, an issue that remains problematic for a number of crops. Clampitt repeats the statement that corn is the food plant that is most efficient in converting sunlight, water, and soil nutrients into biomass, though, depending on whom one reads, the potato and sugarcane apparently vie for that honor. Yet it would be unfair to pursue this line of thought at length. Everyone, amateur or professional, with an interest in corn should read *Midwest Maize*.

Pemmican Empire: Food, Trade, and the Last Bison Hunts in the North American Plains, 1780–1882, by George Colpitts. Studies in Environment and History. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015. xii, 316 pp. Maps, illustrations, graphs, glossary, notes, bibliography, index. \$90.00 hardcover.

Reviewer Michel Hogue is assistant professor of history at Carleton University. He is the author of *Metis and the Medicine Line: Creating a Border and Dividing a People* (2015).

Those of us accustomed to watching our weight have learned to pay attention to the fat in our diets. George Colpitts thinks that historians ought to pay the same attention to the importance of fat in history. In

this original study, Colpitts reexamines the history of the traffic in bison products on the northern Great Plains, focusing on the transformative effects of the trade in pemmican, “a native foodstuff composed mostly of large quantities of bison fat and dried, pounded meat” (1). Colpitts shows how the pemmican produced by indigenous women and men was transformed into one of the region’s principal commodities. He argues that the nature of pemmican—including the caloric boost provided by its mix of fats and proteins—along with the social relations involved in its production, use, and trade, changed the societies and histories of plains indigenous peoples and the colonial history of northwestern North America.

With its close attention to bison as food, *Pemmican Empire* recasts the historical literature on bison and its demise. Colpitts draws the details of his story from the vast archives generated by fur trade entities on the northern plains and from an omnivorous review of the academic literature in archaeology, climate science, human physiology, and nutrition. Colpitts’s research also took him to bison ranches and pemmican camps in Manitoba. In his acknowledgments, Colpitts even thanks the butchers who taught him how bison meat comes off the bone.

And why not? The finer details of butchery are in fact important to the story that Colpitts tells. He details how fur company employees adapted Dene traditions in pemmican making to the plains, thereby tapping the vast energy sources that quite literally fed the expansion of trade networks in the British Northwest. Plains food resources were critical to sustaining the human brigades that plied the waterways through the fur-rich but food-poor boreal forests. The specific ecological circumstances of the prairie steppe and parkland edge were key to the expansion of pemmican production. Not only did climatic conditions make the bison fatter and their seasonal movements more predictable, but also the colder temperatures at these northern latitudes allowed processors to handle fats with fewer worries that warm weather might cause them to spoil. Meanwhile, the kin-based food-sharing networks among the Crees, Assiniboines, and other northern plains peoples that had long existed as a hedge against hunger in an unpredictable environment allowed traders to amass large surpluses of bison products for use in the fur trade. These adaptations to plains hunting and processing traditions laid the basis for mass factory food production, especially as the growing market demand for pemmican at the turn of the nineteenth century propelled the trade’s expansion.

In this sense, Colpitts’s study suggests that an ecological faultline—or “fat frontier”—separated the northern from the central plains and led to diverging histories on either side of that line. To the north, the

exchange of pemmican “created an inseparable society of people where food was produced, traded, and consumed between them” (261). Much of the book traces the cascading consequences of this expanding pemmican trade. For instance, commercial expansion intensified hunting, trapping, and violence as commercial entities competed vigorously to control access to the pemmican that had become so vital to their operations. Among plains peoples, the growing commitment to pemmican production encouraged longer-distance travel, transformed trade patterns, and even propelled the formation of new peoples like the plains Métis, whose emergence Colpitts connects to the economic niche created by the pemmican trade. This book shows how bison meat and fat, just like potatoes, sugar, or other foodstuffs, powerfully shaped human histories. Colpitts shows how bison fat and the energy it provided drove British imperial expansion in northwestern North America.

This “Pemmican Empire,” however, was built on the unsustainable harvest of bison. Although much has been written about bison and its demise, this book’s geographical focus on the northern plains adds a new dimension to those stories. Colpitts shows, for example, how the familiar story about the decline of the bison commons with the intrusion of the market played itself out in very different ways on the northern side of the “fat frontier.” Just as important, he shows how the trade relations that grew up around the preparation and exchange of bison flesh provided the foundational imprint for interactions between indigenous peoples and their would-be colonizers that differed in important respects from that found elsewhere in North America.

Securing the West: Politics, Public Lands, and the Fate of the Old Republic, 1785–1850, by John R. Van Atta. Reconfiguring American Political History. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014. xiii, 295 pp. Maps, tables, notes, essay on sources, index. \$54.95 hardcover and e-book.

Reviewer James W. Oberly is professor of history at the University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire. He is the author of *Sixty Million Acres: American Veterans and Public Lands before the Civil War* (1990).

More than a century ago, the historian Payson Jackson Treat apologized for writing a book on the history of public land policy, acknowledging that the “subject is dull in itself.” Nonetheless, like a physician prescribing a distasteful medicine, Treat insisted in his 1910 book, *The National Land System, 1785–1820*, that some knowledge of the workings of the public lands system was necessary to understand the larger subject of westward movement. Treat offered readers a periodization for understanding the history of public land policy based on the method Con-

gress set for disposing of the national patrimony: (1) credit sales to 1820 with a large minimum acreage for purchase; (2) cash sales, 1820–1841, but with smaller acreage minimums; (3) pre-emption, that is, “squating” on public land without paying for a parcel for a period of months, even years; and then (4) after 1862, homesteading or “free land.” The period of pre-emption coincided with the settling of the Iowa Territory and early statehood. For several decades after Treat, historians more or less embraced his periodization. Almost 50 years ago, historian Mary E. Young wrote, in an influential essay, “Congress Looks West: Liberal Ideology and Public Land Policy in the Nineteenth Century,” that the antebellum Jacksonian period was characterized by multiple and overlapping means of public land disposal. Iowa’s settlement was dominated by the sale and use of military bounty land warrants, some 14 million acres of which were entered at Iowa land offices. Thirty years ago, Daniel Feller’s *The Public Lands in Jacksonian Politics* pushed back the chronology of critical decision making on federal land policy to the late 1820s and early 1830s, restoring to central place the 1830 Webster-Hayne debate in the Senate over the future of the West, as part of the larger debate about the future of the Union.

What new can be said about public land policy before the Civil War after a century of such writings? Are there new sources to be discovered or new historical methods to be employed to make sense of existing sources? John Van Atta’s *Securing the West* does not claim to tell a new story through the discovery of some hitherto overlooked manuscript collection. He uses the same sources Treat, Young, and Feller used. Nor does he bring any new scholarly method to his study; he does the same congressional roll-call counting as Feller. What is new and valuable in *Securing the West* is the author’s careful contrast of the Federalist land policy of the 1780s and 1790s, under both the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution, with policies a generation or two later in the Jacksonian period. Van Atta does fine work in connecting the ideas underlying pre- and post-revolutionary assumptions about virtue and that an independent landowning yeomanry could best guarantee the republic. His contribution is showing the Federalist shaping of such republican ideas away from independence and toward control from above. For Van Atta, the Land Act of 1820, a snoozer, if included at all in any history textbook, was the critical dividing line between a Federalist land policy, on the one hand, and a proto-Jacksonian land policy of rapid, pell-mell disposal of public lands to settlers. Seen from the long view of the eighteenth century, the changes toward giving settlers what they wanted after 1820 was a radical shift from the Federalist position, even more so than Young and Feller may have appreciated when they consid-

ered the change from credit to cash sales, and from cash to pre-emption entries, military bounty land warrants, and graduated (discounted) land prices. The wonder is that the Jeffersonians kept Federalist land policies for as long as they did.

Payson Treat was correct in 1910: Some knowledge of public land policy is needed to understand the way Iowa was settled. In the aftermath of Indian Removal from Iowa in the 1830s and 1840s, all the circumstances were in place to encourage a wave of Euro-American settlers to take into private ownership what became some of the richest agricultural land in the world. Iowa and Ohio may both be in the Midwest, but the policies designed to dispose of the public lands in Ohio in the 1780s were a continent away from those in place to dispose of Iowa's public lands.

A Store Almost in Sight: The Economic Transformation of Missouri from the Louisiana Purchase to the Civil War, by Jeff Bremer. Iowa and the Midwest Experience. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2014. 239 pp. Map, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95 paperback and e-book.

Reviewer Kim M. Gruenwald is associate professor of history at Kent State University. She is the author of *River of Enterprise: The Commercial Origins of Regional Identity in the Ohio Valley, 1790–1850* (2002).

Of *A Store Almost in Sight*, Jeff Bremer writes, “This is a story about people, the economic choices they made, and their struggles to build their lives” (4). In the debate over the transition to capitalism, Bremer sides firmly with those who favor the market-oriented interpretation. After delving deeply into dozens and dozens of collections of family history papers located in Missouri archives, he concluded that, rather than fearing capitalism as disruptive to society, frontiersmen and women actively sought market participation.

The first three chapters set the stage and introduce readers to “an enterprising and industrious population” (1). The first chapter sketches the background to U.S. settlement: the fur trade, French settlements, and a brief takeover by the Spanish. The second chapter details the rush to settle Missouri after the turn of the century. Settlers from the upper south and Kentucky moved west because elite planters controlled too much of the land back home. Initially, they settled in St. Louis's hinterland but gradually spread out along the Missouri River and its tributaries, bringing slaves with them. From the beginning, they exported livestock and crops. Chapter three focuses on settlers' motivations as they came looking for enough cheap land to make their families independent.

Fertile land and the mild climate proved to be draws, and many hoped to make money by speculating in land.

In the next three chapters, Bremer explains just how much hard work it took to make a go of it. Anyone starting a new life in Missouri needed an axe to fell trees and a gun to shoot game. Diseases such as malaria, cholera, and dysentery slowed down many and destroyed the dreams of others. Corn and hogs proved to be early staples. Farmers employed both subsistence and market-oriented strategies, and they shared and traded labor, tools, food, livestock, and grazing land with their neighbors. In a chapter titled "Cook, Nursemaid, and Housewife," Bremer chronicles the amount of time women spent caring for children, gardening, preparing food, and taking care of livestock. Their participation in the market economy proved crucial to the success of families as they sold butter, cheese, eggs, and cloth to local merchants.

In the final two chapters, Bremer analyzes the expanding market economy. During the first half of the nineteenth century, farmers shipped a wide variety of goods, including flour, whiskey, pork, corn, hemp, tobacco, and livestock, down the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers by flatboat. The proliferation of steamboats in the 1820s and beyond drove the need for wood used to fuel the craft. Yankee peddlers sold goods by wagon to those living too far from the rivers for easy access, but travel by river trumped travel by road until the coming of railroads. Steamboat travel transformed life on western waters. St. Louis quickly became a hub of activity, and other market centers grew as well, providing links between farmers and the wider world of trade. Looking in the other direction, trade with Santa Fe, New Mexico, and, later, with those heading for the gold fields of California helped Missouri's economy expand further as domestic markets grew. Missouri settlers wanted consumer goods, and general merchants provided them in exchange for farmers' crops, serving as middlemen if farmers did not want to make the flatboat journey to market on their own. Shopkeepers provided credit, allowing farmers to purchase not only spices and tools, but chocolate, gloves, and window glass as well. Consumerism expanded and thrived on the frontier as steamboats brought a wider variety of goods at cheaper prices. Bremer concludes by noting that getting ahead proved much more difficult after the Civil War.

For the most part, the author keeps his study narrowly focused on the choices made by ordinary settlers. He does not ignore the issue of slavery but concentrates on the actions of white farmers and shopkeepers. He does discuss the transportation revolution but does not address the relationship between economic change and the rise of sectionalism, the Second Great Awakening, or the age of Jackson. What he does, he

does well. He tells many, many specific stories to make his points, and the occasional focus on the differences between American and German migrants is welcome. *A Store Almost in Sight* is a carefully researched book and an interesting read. I recommend it to anyone who wants to know more about the material life of those who settled Missouri during the first half of the nineteenth century.

The Great Medicine Road: Narratives of the Oregon, California, and Mormon Trails, part 1, 1840–1848, edited by Michael L. Tate with the assistance of Will Bagley and Richard L. Rieck. American Trails Series 24. Norman: Arthur H. Clark Co., an imprint of the University of Oklahoma Press, 2014. 339 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95 hard-cover.

Reviewer J. T. Murphy is professor of history at Indiana University South Bend. His research and writing have focused on the military history of the nineteenth-century U.S. West, the Oregon Trail, and frontier settlement, among other topics.

On April 1, 1846, as J. M. Harrison recalled, the villagers of Birmingham, Iowa, witnessed “an unusual bustle and stir.” “Friends and relatives, came in from the surrounding country, to witness our departure for the far off Oregon” (216). His family, lured by a mild, healthy climate and available land, joined a modest-sized wagon train, “The Iowa Company,” and were among 1,200 people who traveled overland to Oregon that year. Harrison soon became an ardent booster, promoting the Pacific Slope’s economic potential and raising money for schools, but when relating his trail experience 29 years later, he emphasized its hardships and wildness, possibly to enhance his worth as a pioneer. “We were without the pale of civilization,” he remembered. “The space of two thousand miles of plains, sands and deserts, inhabited by numerous tribes of Savages, lay between us and our final goal” (218). As proof, he highlighted one of the few Indian depredations along the trail, a Shoshone massacre of 20 emigrants in 1854—an incident that underscored his own narrow escape eight years before when Indians had stripped him naked and killed his companion, Edward Trimble.

Harrison’s account is one of 15 collected and edited by Michael L. Tate, a noted historian of the American West, with the assistance of Will Bagley and Richard Rieck, scholars who have written extensively about the overland trails. This volume, covering the period 1840–1848, is the first in a series focusing on individual narratives about going to Oregon, California, and Utah through 1869. Using diaries, letters, and memoirs from men and women of varied ages, backgrounds, and experiences, the editors “allow the pioneer generation to speak directly to modern

audiences" (17). Blending this "original pioneer spirit" with scholarly insight, they believe, will stimulate modern readers to appreciate "one of the greatest mass migrations in American history" (34).

To ensure their success, the editors provide four maps originally printed in earlier studies such as John Unruh's *The Plains Across*, photographs of key figures, illustrations of trail landmarks, and thorough explanatory introductions and footnotes. They also include an impressive bibliography of scholarly works and trail narratives. Among the voices chosen are well-known historical figures and those less so: Pierre-Jean De Smet, the Jesuit priest and missionary; Medorem Crawford, one of the original Oregon pioneers; Lilburn Boggs, a former Missouri governor who settled in California; Lucy Jane Hall Bennett, a survivor of Stephen Meeks's infamous cutoff; and Amanda Esrey Rhoads, a member of the Mormon migration in 1846. All describe life on the trail or in their new land. Some offer practical advice about what to bring or leave behind. All fulfill the editors' expectations. This volume, along with those to follow in the series, will prove extremely helpful for researchers; and anyone interested in the lives of western pioneers will find these stories engaging and instructive.

Dubuque's Forgotten Cemetery: Excavating a Nineteenth-Century Burial Ground in a Twenty-First-Century City, by Robin M. Lillie and Jennifer E. Mack. Iowa and the Midwest Experience. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2015. 228 pp. Maps, table, illustrations, appendix, notes, recommended reading, index. \$27.50 paperback.

Reviewer Thomas G. Connors is associate professor of history at the University of Northern Iowa. His areas of research interest include cemeteries and burial practices.

Since the mid-nineteenth century, Americans have approached burial with particular assumptions and common practices, including the notion that cemeteries remain in place in perpetuity, a permanent landscape of stone monuments and well-tended lawns. Dubuque's Third Street Cemetery predates these Victorian practices. It existed as a Catholic burial ground for early settlers from 1833 until 1880, two decades after newer diocesan cemeteries had opened. It never had grass lawns or many monuments; most graves would have had wood markers or remained unmarked. Disused and long uncared for, the cemetery faded from the landscape, particularly after a convent was built on the site and surviving monuments were relocated about 1948. By then, most residents believed that all the graves had been removed decades earlier. Despite recurrent evidence to the contrary in intervening years, that was

thought to be the case until 2007, when graves began turning up as the land was prepared for redevelopment. Iowa law required the matter to be handed over to the Office of the State Archaeologist. The resulting excavation over several years led to a scholarly archaeological report and this more user-friendly presentation of the findings, *Dubuque's Forgotten Cemetery*.

The excavation found 939 graves containing skeletal remains of 889 individuals in what had been about a quarter of the cemetery grounds. This is the largest Euro-American Roman Catholic cemetery ever so examined, making its conclusions of national significance. Using archaeological and documentary evidence, the book's authors set out what can be said about the cemetery's history and burials. Ultimately, the remains and goods found were in poor condition, limiting the conclusions that could be drawn from them. Contrary to what may be imagined, no coffin remained intact, and precious little beyond some wood, metal, buttons, bone, and teeth survived. The evidence for elaborate coffins and clothing certainly reflects Victorian practices from the later period. By contrast, simpler wood caskets and burial garments may represent the limited resources of the pioneer period or just of the deceased. A fifth of the burials contained religious goods, principally holy medals or rosaries, common in Catholic devotional practice. Less information could be drawn from deteriorated bones (height, sex, age, some diseases, injuries) and teeth (age, wear, childhood malnutrition).

Without a plot map or monuments, matching names to graves proved mainly impossible, although engraved crosses identified two individuals. Documentary sources contributed considerably more information on those buried in the cemetery, including two murderers hanged in 1860. Although not everyone buried here was Catholic, evidence confirms numerous Irish and German immigrants, with some French Canadians and possibly an African American family, about what would be expected from Dubuque's first half-century.

Most importantly, the authors' reflections offer a model for what should be done when "lost" cemeteries resurface in the way of progress. One finding is that the one million dollars spent on scientific excavation is cheaper than commercial removal. Another is the importance of local involvement. Communicating with the community throughout the process helps curtail negative rumors and builds support for the project. While much of what was commonly believed turned out to be wrong or unproven (few graves had been removed; there was no evidence of mass graves for cholera or influenza victims), drawing on local genealogical societies and archives (Loras College's Center for Dubuque History) provided much of the documentary evidence that brought the

cemetery's story to life. Property owners past and present were less helpful: the developer filed lawsuits and eventually abandoned the project; the archdiocesan archivist stonewalled requests for information.

The authors draw thoughtful conclusions about what society owes the dead it decides to relocate, and they suggest a template for how that can be accomplished with respect and dignity, while at the same time recording what can be learned from the site. The experience in Dubuque underlines the challenges of such an undertaking, perhaps making a case that avoiding the disturbance of burial grounds may be the best policy except in the most compelling cases of public need. This volume itself honors the lost cemetery by gathering together what can be known about it and providing rare evidence from a pioneer immigrant cemetery in a river town. By doing so, it makes an important contribution to the history of Dubuque, Iowa, and American burial practices.

Busy in the Cause: Iowa, the Free-State Struggle in the West, and the Prelude to the Civil War, by Lowell J. Soike. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014. xvi, 288 pp. Map, illustrations, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$30.00 paperback.

Reviewer Michael A. Morrison is associate professor of history at Purdue University. He is the author of *Slavery and the American West: The Eclipse of Manifest Destiny and the Coming of the Civil War* (1997).

In this deeply researched, closely argued, revelatory, and highly readable monograph, Lowell Soike situates the Kansas territorial crisis within the larger context of midwestern sectional politics. He clearly shows how Iowa was both affected by and itself influenced events in that troubled territory. It did so primarily in three ways: as violence escalated in Kansas, the state sent settlers, furnished arms from its arsenal to free-state combatants, and offered a refuge to antislavery forces who temporarily fled the territory. Iowa also provided a training ground for John Brown's supporters who would attack Harpers Ferry in October 1859. After the violence in Kansas abated (it never completely disappeared), settlements in Iowa, particularly those populated by evangelicals, were havens for slaves fleeing Kansas as they passed through the state on their way north to freedom.

Whereas most studies of the conflict focus on the pro- and antislavery struggle within the territory, Soike's is an outward-looking perspective that demonstrates how it shaped Iowans' growing commitment to the Free-State cause. Encouraged by David Rice Atchison and Benjamin and John Stringfellow, unorganized proslavery bands dramatically upped the level of violence, closed the Missouri River to northerners

migrating to the territory, and for good measure plundered the emigrants' belongings. Iowans previously unconcerned with the outcome in Kansas increasingly and fervently became Free-State sympathizers.

Soike's argument is nuanced and balanced. He reveals differences between those who favored aggressive retaliatory measures against proslavery forces in Kansas and raids in western Missouri to free the enslaved on the one hand, and, on the other, "conservative Free State men who wanted the movement's actions kept defensive and lawful" (107). There were limits to the antislavery sentiments, however. Many Iowans — indeed most northern Republicans — strongly supported and abetted a Free-State resolution in Kansas to ensure white, free-labor settlement there without necessarily advocating immediate abolition everywhere in the United States.

Iowa Democrats, fearing that Free-State arrivals would "dictate to us a government to preach Abolitionism and dig underground Rail Roads" (211), asserted (one would hardly say they proved) that the emigrants were the source of all the conflict in that unhappy territory. Democratic editors insisted that western Missourians were the "victims of northern aggression by organized Free-State colonization" (211). Ironically, Democratic efforts to assail the Underground Railroad and in so doing incite racial intolerance and bigotry led Republican leaders to oppose the attacks and pass measures for black equality. Taken together, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, repeal of the Missouri Compromise ban on slavery, and staunch Democratic opposition to the Free-State movement and support for proslavery forces in Kansas had the effect — if not the intent — of reducing the party to minority status in Iowa by the late 1850s.

One of the many qualities of this book is Soike's ability to give a human face to abstract political conflict in Iowa and armed combat in Kansas. A case in point is John Brown's legacy and influence. After his trial and hanging, free-soil Kansans remembered his attacks on slavery and raid to liberate slaves in western Missouri. Brown's opponents denounced him for his killing — brutal murder, actually — of five proslavery settlers along Pottawatomie Creek. Moreover, Brown's violent opposition to slavery in Kansas, his Missouri raid, and the attack on the arsenal at Harpers Ferry fired the hearts of other Iowans like Charles Ball, Edwin Morrison, Albert Southwick, and Joseph Coppoc. Quakers all, they were inspired to launch a similar raid to aid the escape of 25 slaves owned by Morgan Walker of Missouri. Like Brown's assault at Harpers Ferry, the raid ended in abject failure and the deaths of Ball and Morrison. Their zeal could not compensate for the combination "of having too few men and equipment, of having selected poor leaders, of suffering

abandonment at the scene by wagon mates, and of being betrayed by a presumed friend" (191). Idealism had its limits.

This is a work of a mature scholar. Soike brings to this study a wealth of knowledge amassed over 36 years as a historian at the State Historical Society of Iowa. By recentering the Kansas imbroglio away from Congress and out from the territory, he has made an important contribution to understanding the way the territorial issue transformed Iowans who thought of themselves as westerners into partisans of the Free-State movement and participants in a sectional conflict that issued in and was resolved by the Civil War and more than 640,000 deaths.

Necessary Evil: Settling Missouri with a Rope and a Gun, by Joe Johnston. St. Louis: Missouri History Museum, 2014; distributed by the University of Chicago Press. 336 pp. Maps, illustrations, bibliography, index. \$24.95 paperback.

Reviewer Catherine McNicol Stock is the Barbara Zaccheo Kohn '72 Professor of History and director of the American Studies Program at Connecticut College. She is the author of *Rural Radicals: Righteous Rage in the American Grain* (1996); and *Main Street in Crisis: The Great Depression and the Old Middle Class on the Northern Plains* (1992).

Necessary Evil is not intended as an academic history of vigilante violence in Missouri in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. It includes no overview of books on similar topics, no footnotes, and only a brief bibliography. The author freely admits that he "created" and "added" some of the details in his descriptions of events (12). Similarly, Johnston asserts that "the level of vigilante activity . . . of this length and depth of depredation, happened only in Missouri" without providing specific data to back up the statement (8). For readers in Iowa, this is particularly disappointing, because one of the frontier areas that Johnston claims did not fall into the habit of solving every problem through vigilante justice was Iowa. It would be interesting to know more about how different parts of the Midwest came to develop so differently.

For a non-academic audience, *Necessary Evil* proves a literally unforgettable read—full of violent deaths, torture, revenge, all in the name of what Johnston calls justice. Each chapter concerns a different saga of vigilantism, beginning with the "Mormon wars" and including the regulator movement, Wyatt Earp, the Bald Knobbers, and other infamous and anonymous vigilantes. As his title reveals, Johnston believes that this carnage was a "necessary evil," a stage of society on the way to a more regulated community. He even suggests that we can turn our horror at the pain and suffering of the victims into "love" for the perpetrators and ap-

preciation of their dedication to justice (324). Readers can even imagine, he says, that “maybe there’s a hint of vigilante heritage in all of us” (324).

Even if Johnston does not pretend to be an academic, it is still inconceivable to me that he could so thoroughly romanticize the vengeance and terror in our past. We live in a world where the extralegal use of violence is making justice impossible to achieve in many places both close to home and far away. Indeed, Johnston can only create such a romantic story about vigilantism by leaving a major part of the story out. He “avoided stories of racism” and all examples of “racially motivated violence, especially leading to lynchings” (11). But why did he do so? And how are racially motivated lynchings different from those he describes and glorifies? In each case, people in power use extralegal violence to terrorize the community’s “others” or “outsiders” – some perfectly innocent of the charges, if there were any – and to maintain their power in society. But with stories of black bodies hanging from trees included in the narrative, Johnston’s entire premise would fall apart. With racially motivated lynchings included, Johnston could not reasonably conclude that Americans “love the democracy” of the vigilante story (323). Nor could he assert that “the overriding story of Missouri’s vigilantes is the story of good people in good families, yearning for happiness and peace” (11). The violence in our past needs not to be romanticized but interrogated and reconciled, now more than ever.

Pioneer Girl: The Annotated Autobiography, by Laura Ingalls Wilder; edited by Pamela Smith Hill. Pierre: South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 2014. lxix, 400 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, appendixes, bibliography, index. \$39.95 hardcover.

Reviewer John J. Fry is professor of history at Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights, Illinois. An authority on the life and works of Laura Ingalls Wilder, he is also the editor of *Almost Pioneers: One Couple’s Homesteading Adventure in the West* (2013).

Laura Ingalls Wilder’s Little House novels have delighted young and old readers ever since they were first published during the 1930s and ‘40s. Based on Wilder’s own childhood, the books feature clear descriptions of pioneer life in multiple locations in Wisconsin, Kansas, Minnesota, and South Dakota from the point of view of a fictional girl who grows from a toddler into a young woman.

Before gaining fame for writing autobiographical children’s fiction, however, Wilder was a columnist for a Missouri farm newspaper from 1911 to 1925. She also had several articles published in national magazines. She then retired from journalism to compose a memoir titled “Pioneer

Girl." The memoir begins when she was just 7 years old and ends with her marriage at age 18. Wilder's daughter, novelist and biographer Rose Wilder Lane, typed the manuscript and attempted to get it published. "Pioneer Girl" eventually went through three revisions, but Lane was unable to secure a publisher for the work. However, a juvenile book of stories drawn from Laura's earliest childhood, especially those told to her by her father, did land a contract. *Little House in the Big Woods* was published in 1932, and the Little House series was born. Seven additional books were published over the next 11 years.

The popularity of the Little House books was staggering. Millions of copies were sold. The books were excerpted for elementary reading texts and translated into dozens of languages. Historic sites were established in five different states, and the stories inspired a television series during the 1970s. In the twenty-first century, the books continue to be loved by a devoted core of fans and enjoyed by a broader audience. However, while Laura's farm newspaper columns and other writings have been published, *Pioneer Girl* was never published until this edition.

In 2010 the South Dakota State Historical Society created the Pioneer Girl Project to "create a comprehensive edition of Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Pioneer Girl*." By any standard, it has accomplished that goal. Pamela Smith Hill, author of a biography of Wilder published in 2007, edited the volume. The hardbound book is 9" x 10" — larger than a normal trade hardcover book but smaller than a coffee table book. It begins with Hill's excellent historical introduction to Wilder and Lane and to the history of the manuscript itself. The original manuscript is then presented and lavishly annotated. Maps created for the book give the locations of all the places the Ingalls family lived. The book also features all of the extant photographs of Laura and her family — and many of the other people and places mentioned in the memoir. A conclusion sets the memoir in the context of Wilder's life and Little House scholarship. Appendixes provide a facsimile of the juvenile book that first attracted publishers and several extended accounts from typed editions that did not appear in the handwritten manuscript. The bibliography gives a comprehensive list of works published by and about Wilder and Lane and their works. The book ends with an exhaustive index.

Notes begin at the side of each page of manuscript, but often cover multiple following pages. The notes are the product of careful research; it appears that Hill has consulted all of the appropriate sources. Some notes compare Wilder's accounts to extant public records that trace the Ingalls family's life. Others provide background information on the people, places, events, diseases, and other phenomena Wilder described. Still other notes compare the accounts given in *Pioneer Girl* to those in

the Little House books and other writings by Wilder. Hill makes cogent observations about Wilder's prose, noting the ways that it draws on her farm newspaper columns but lacks the polish of the finished children's books. A rough estimate suggests that notes, photographs, and maps take up almost as much space as the text of the manuscript itself. The exhaustiveness of the notes at times does make reading the book an exercise in turning pages back and forth. While it is possible to read the memoir through by itself, the notes draw readers in, and one often finds oneself relying on the notes to explain background and context.

In sum, *Pioneer Girl: The Annotated Autobiography* is not just the publication of Wilder's memoir. The editor and publisher have successfully blended two types of books for two audiences. One book is the memoir itself, the entertaining story of Laura's youth, including many details that are not given in the Little House books. These include the birth and death of a younger brother, the family's year-long stay in a small town in Iowa, and descriptions of several neighbors' teenage pregnancies. This book will appeal to anyone with an interest in true stories about women and childhood in the nineteenth-century American Midwest. The other book is a compendium of what we know about Wilder's life, how she came to write the memoir, and how *Pioneer Girl* fits with her other works. This book is a work of scholarship that will set the standard for Wilder studies for years to come.

The Iowa Route: A History of the Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Northern Railway, by Don L. Hofsommer. Railroads Past and Present. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015. xii, 292 pp. Illustrations, maps, tables, notes, bibliography, index. \$75.00 hardcover.

Reviewer Simon Cordery is chair of the Department of History at Western Illinois University. He is the author of *The Iron Road in the Prairie State: The Story of Illinois Railroad* (forthcoming, 2016).

Railroads opened Iowa to settlement and cultivation, integrated the state into a national economy, and challenged local power. By 1900, they were numerous and nearly omnipresent, but much of the state's railroad network has disappeared since then. Don Hofsommer, a veteran historian of the midwestern railroading scene, offers a useful, informative, and thorough history of one of those vanished corporations, the Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Northern Railway (BCR&N). He builds on his earlier histories of the Minneapolis & St. Louis and the Iowa Central railroads, both of which figure prominently in the book under review, to show how the BCR&N was "representative of innumerable enterprises that popped up around the United States during the age of railways" (ix).

Events beyond Iowa drove the creation of the BCR&N. As Chicago grew in prominence and power, Iowa's civic leaders sought ways to avoid fueling that city's development. The BCR&N was one of several efforts to do that. The line opened in 1871 as the Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Minnesota, its boosters hoping ultimately to connect St. Louis with Minneapolis. By 1877 passengers and freight could travel from Minneapolis to St. Louis, with the BCR&N providing the link from the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad (CB&Q) at Burlington to the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railroad at Albert Lea. Strategic alliances, most notably with the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad (CRI&P), and occasional antagonisms, especially with the CB&Q, show how the BCR&N was neither master of its own destiny nor even a particularly important player in the world of railroads.

Building ahead of demand to create customers was a tried and true technique of the railroad age. The BCR&N did exactly that, nowhere more spectacularly than in its race to Spirit Lake, an expanding vacation spot it marketed as "a little bit of Eden" (153). Reaching the lake in 1882 ahead of rival Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul, it built a hotel and operated steamboats to attract vacationers from as far away as Georgia. Competition dampened revenues already reduced by government regulations, however, and by 1884 the CRI&P controlled the BCR&N, squeezing the smaller company between two behemoths, as the CB&Q was angered by the Rock Island's incursion into its backyard in Burlington. Under Rock Island patronage, the BCR&N expanded into Dakota Territory, and in 1902 the CRI&P purchased the BCR&N outright. Unfortunately the Panic of 1893, successive dry seasons that dropped Spirit Lake by eight feet, and the disastrous takeover of the Rock Island by an investment syndicate ended the BCR&N's independent life. An epilogue recounts an extended denouement to the abandonment of the Rock Island in 1980. Four separate lines continue to use track originally built by the BCR&N, including the thriving Iowa Northern Railway, but the "Iowa Route" itself is a distant memory.

This is an important book for anyone interested in the history of railroading and in nineteenth-century Iowa. *The Iowa Route* is written from the perspective of and about the major investors and managers who funded and operated it. It is well produced, boasting excellent illustrations and many maps, though the latter are all from contemporary railroad publications and some parts are difficult to decipher. Nevertheless, this elegantly written book places the history of the BCR&N in its larger context and serves as an admirable addition to the growing literature on Iowa's railroads.

American Railroads: Decline and Renaissance in the Twentieth Century, by Robert E. Gallamore and John R. Meyer. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014. xiii, 506 pp. Maps, tables, graphs, sidebars, illustrations, notes, index. \$55.00 hardcover.

Reviewer Jeff Schramm is associate professor of history at Missouri University of Science and Technology in Rolla, Missouri. He is the author of *Out of Steam: Dieselization and American Railroads, 1920–1960* (2010).

At the beginning of the twentieth century Iowa was covered with a network of railroad lines owned and operated by dozens of companies, large and small. The oft-repeated claim that no point in the state was more than ten miles from a railroad was not an exaggeration. Today many of those lines are just a memory or, perhaps, a bike path. Yet all one has to do is stand beside the Union Pacific mainline near the new Kate Shelley Bridge and watch the parade of trains to realize that railroading is still a vibrant industry in Iowa. For those curious about the broad business and economic history of railroads over the past 120 years and with a little prior knowledge of economics and history, this book will enlighten and inform.

To attempt to write a broad and comprehensive business and economic history of railroads in the twentieth century is a huge undertaking but one that Gallamore and Meyer take on with vigor and at which they ultimately succeed. Gallamore has served the railroad industry in some way for over 40 years, including stints in government and industry and finally as director of the Transportation Center and professor in the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University. Meyer was Gallamore's mentor at Harvard, where he was a professor in the John F. Kennedy School of Government. Both have been intimately involved with railroads since the 1960s and bring an insider's perspective to the book.

This monumental work begins with a thumbnail sketch of the history of railroads as a business and economic entity from the late 1800s to the present. Subsequent chapters dive into greater detail on specific topics such as government regulation of rates and services, policy implications of competition or consolidation, rival freight modes and competition from motor trucks and river barges, the decline of passenger service, the mid-century merger craze, the critical time of the 1970s and the government reform and revitalization acts, the history of the government-created northeastern railroad (Conrail) that resulted from the crisis of the 1970s, the Staggers Rail Act and deregulation in the 1980s, the consolidation of railroads in the last quarter of the century, and Amtrak and the ongoing challenges of passenger railroading. Technological

changes such as new signals and control systems, mechanized maintenance of way equipment, and, most importantly, diesel locomotives are detailed in the next chapter. A concluding chapter puts the previous chapters into a larger perspective, and an afterword takes the conclusions made and extrapolates into policy prescriptions for the future. Each chapter could stand alone, but together they provide a broad and deep understanding of the large-scale economic and political challenges and opportunities railroads faced during the twentieth century. Each chapter is complemented with charts, graphs, maps, and photos that enhance the text and provide additional helpful information. The illustrations are in black and white only but are generally readable and adequately sized. Text boxes with additional information also complement each chapter and allow readers to explore some topics in greater detail than the main text does. The book is extensively researched with ample endnotes and a useful index.

For those looking for information on the social impact of railroads or more information about what great-grandfather did while working for the Milwaukee Road, this book will not answer your questions. The casual reader looking for an easily readable overview of railroad history will likely be put off by the sometimes dense language and technical terminology. However, for those interested in whatever happened to railroads like the Rock Island, or the Burlington, or the Chicago & North Western, this book delivers. An economic, business, and policy history above all, this work will not satisfy those looking for social, cultural, or labor specifics. But social or cultural history is not what this book set out to be. It is a masterful synthesis of an immense amount of information about an essential and dynamic American industry – one that shaped, and continues to shape, not only Iowa and the Midwest, but the country as a whole. This work will likely become the standard reference work on the economic history of American railroads in the twentieth century.

Jewish Federation of Greater Des Moines 100th Anniversary, 1914–2014: Celebrating a Century of Benevolence. Waukee: Jewish Federation of Greater Des Moines, 2014. 52 pp. Illustrations.

Reviewer Oliver Pollak is professor of history emeritus at the University of Nebraska Omaha. He has researched and written about the history of Jews in Nebraska and Des Moines.

Dubuque witnessed the arrival of Iowa's first Jews in 1833. Jews were in Des Moines as early as 1848. Now, about half of Iowa's 6,300 Jews live in Des Moines. They came from Germany, Russia, Poland, and Lithuania. They maintained religious and communal identity by establishing

houses of worship and cemeteries and fostering Jewish education and a social infrastructure. Jews prayed together in homes in Des Moines as early as 1869 and formed Des Moines's first synagogue, B'nai Jeshuran (Children of Righteousness) in 1873. Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, the unaffiliated, and, since 1978, Chabad, cooperated to improve the quality of Jewish life.

This book memorializes the 100 years since the founding of United Jewish Philanthropies in 1914. Twenty-eight vignettes identify synagogues, economic life, social services, personalities, and the Iowa Jewish Historical Society, established in 1989. The book even includes a section on "Jewish Cooking in Iowa." This showcase of Jewish Des Moines is attractively illustrated. Two maps indicate Jewish residences, businesses, and houses of worship in east and west Des Moines in 1895. This thumbnail history suggests how much more depth could be achieved in a lengthier study.

How Dutch Americans Stayed Dutch: An Historical Perspective on Ethnic Identities, by Michael J. Douma. American Studies. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014. 238 pp. Illustrations, tables, notes, bibliography, index. \$99.00 hardcover.

Reviewer Douglas Firth Anderson is professor emeritus of history and interim reference librarian and archivist at Northwestern College (Iowa). He is a co-author of *Orange City* (2014).

Michael J. Douma's *How Dutch Americans Stayed Dutch* is about ethnic identity historically considered: Who did the Dutch who came to the American Midwest in the nineteenth century think they were, who do they think they have become, and why have their self-perceptions changed from then to now? Douma has a personal stake in his account. When relatives from the Netherlands visited his grandfather in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 1993, it "triggered" an "ethnic awareness" in him that he pursued into graduate studies (15). This book is Douma's revised Florida State University dissertation. Rather than rewriting his dissertation, he appears merely to have added to it.

Douma examines various factors that helped shift midwestern Dutch American self-understanding. The Civil War, for example, spurred many new immigrants to commit to American citizenship (chap. 2). The war's aftermath as well as individual African Americans helped immigrants and their children begin to come to terms with America's "whiteness" (chap. 3). Dutch consulates in the U.S. played a role in connecting immigrants to each other and to their former homeland (chap. 5). The native-born second generation, typified by Michigan

journalist and novelist Arnold Mulder, found it easier to think of themselves as American Dutch rather than Dutch Americans (chap. 6). Also in Michigan, Holland's annual Tulip Time, begun in 1929, became a way of secularizing Dutch American identity in a way that was "colorful, quaint, and commercial" (135; chap. 7). The fading away of the Dutch language, particularly after World War I, was a major marker, along with others, of a shifting self-perception among midwestern Dutch Americans (chap. 8). Yet even today there are institutions that foster Dutch heritage, and genealogy is helping many Dutch Americans stay Dutch in the twenty-first century, even if in ways far different than in the mid-nineteenth century (chap. 9).

Douma's study is important for the field of Dutch American history in the Midwest. He focuses primarily on nineteenth-century Dutch immigrants to Michigan and Iowa and their descendants. Secessionists from the Netherlands state Reformed church only briefly dominated numerically the colonies of Holland, Michigan, and Pella, Iowa, yet their piety and denominational commitments have long held sway over midwestern Dutch identity. "Religion (and not class nor race) was the central premise upon which Dutch American communities were formed" (16), and rivalry between the Reformed Church in America (RCA) and the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) helped the Dutch stay Dutch (chaps. 1 and 4).

There is, however, less to this book than first appears. To begin, there are a disconcerting number of errors, and the lack of maps to clarify where Dutch Americans came from and where they settled, as well as the lack of any illustrations from before 1897, is disappointing. Furthermore, given the "central premise" of religion for Dutch American identity, it is puzzling how little Douma seems to make of the ethnic community's "pietism," especially since he lists Eugene P. Heideman's *The Practice of Piety: The Theology of the Midwestern Reformed Church in America, 1866–1966* in his bibliography.

Heideman's "phantom" presence—listed in the bibliography but not appearing substantively in the text or in the notes—is not an outlier. The work of David E. Zwart—"Faithful Remembering: Constructing Dutch America in the Twentieth Century" (Ph.D. diss., Western Michigan University, 2012)—is too recent for Douma to have used. However, his bibliography lists the Dutch-language weekly newspaper *De Volksvriend* (Orange City, Iowa) and Robert Schoone-Jongen's *Annals of Iowa* article (Summer 2010) about it—but there is no substantive use of the newspaper in the text. Further, although an article by Brian Beltman on the Pella Dutch is cited in a note (188n), there is nothing by Beltman in the bibliography. Beltman has a fine biographical article on Henry

Hospers, Orange City's colony leader, in the *Biographical Dictionary of Iowa* and three useful articles in the *Annals of Iowa* on the Dutch in northwest Iowa (Winter 1993, Spring 1996, and Spring 2003), but there is no discussion of Hospers or of the Dutch colony in northwest Iowa. Finally, the absence of Beltman's *Dutch Farmer in the Missouri Valley: The Life and Letters of Ulbe Eringa, 1866-1950* (1996) in a book about Dutch American identity is troubling.

The arc of Douma's argument is quite plausible: "Dutch American identities were originally anchored in the social structure of the church, which served as a de facto ethnic institution. Dutch American ethnic identities today, however, are tied more closely to the family unit than to community or congregation. . . . Dutch ethnic identification in America has been replaced with a strong interest in Dutch heritage and ancestry, both largely detached from religion" (157). Yet the preponderance of his evidence is from western Michigan in general, and Holland in particular. He gives only a cursory nod to Wisconsin, Iowa (i.e., Pella), Chicago, southern California, and a few other places. Thus, the applicability of his argument for Dutch Americans beyond Holland, Michigan, remains to be shown. Western Michigan was, and still is, the center of midwestern and western Dutch American culture, but it is not, and never has been, the entirety of that culture.

Prohibition in Eastern Iowa, by Linda Betsinger McCann. Des Moines: The Iowan Books. 128 pp. Illustrations, bibliography. \$19.95 paperback.

Reviewer Timothy Walch is the director emeritus of the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and a volunteer at the State Historical Society of Iowa in Iowa City.

"All I know is what I read in the papers," Will Rogers told the *New York Times* in September 1923. That humorous observation could have been the organizing principle for *Prohibition in Eastern Iowa*. In 128 pages, Linda Betsinger McCann provides something of a compilation of newspaper stories about prohibition in eastern Iowa.

McCann may be familiar to readers with an interest in local Iowa history. She is the author of two dozen books, including seven on the history of the Cedar Valley alone. A history enthusiast who spent many years as a registered nurse, McCann has devoted her retirement to writing histories of various Iowa topics. Her most recent book before this one was on the interurban railroad between Waverly and Cedar Rapids; her next will be on Civilian Conservation Camps, presumably in Iowa.

McCann's interest in prohibition came as a result of conversations with young people who have never heard of this "noble experiment." As she did for her other books, McCann conducted substantial library

research, arranged interviews, and began to write. The result is serviceable but far from definitive. It reflects a variety of strengths as well as significant limitations. The book will be informative for those who know little about the topic but will not meet the needs or expectations of academic historians.

Prohibition in Eastern Iowa provides a cursory overview of the implementation and enforcement of prohibition in eastern Iowa from 1920 to 1933. McCann organized her book into eight chapters plus an introduction, conclusion, and bibliography. She includes chapters on organizations involved in the campaign, on brewers and the liquor industry, on the impact of prohibition on the state, and even a chapter on "loop holes."

McCann writes reasonably well; most readers will have no trouble with her prose. Her chapters use bold type and subheads to highlight subtopics of particular importance. More important, many of the chapters have extended quotations from numerous local newspapers. Each quotation block is printed in italics but not set off from the rest of the text. Some readers will find this use of bold type, roman type, and extended italics to be disconcerting. Although each newspaper quotation is identified by the title of the paper and the date of publication, McCann does not provide specific citations for other sources that she used in her research.

Prohibition in Eastern Iowa is one of several similar books published under the auspices of *The Iowan*, a company devoted to promoting the state's culture and heritage. As a magazine, *The Iowan* goes back to 1952; in recent years, the company has branched into book publishing as well. With all of its publications, *The Iowan* relies on free-lance writers and historians to produce articles and books that celebrate as well as inform. Both the author and the publisher are to be commended for their work in this effort.

Little Hawk and the Lone Wolf: A Memoir, by Raymond C. Kaquatosh. Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2014. xi, 259 pp. \$22.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Thomas A. Britten is associate professor of history at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. He is the author of *The Lipan Apaches* (2010); *Black Warriors: A History of the Seminole-Negro Indian Scouts* (1999); and *American Indians in World War I: At War and at Home* (1997).

Raymond C. Kaquatosh (Little Hawk) was born July 25, 1924, on the Menominee reservation in eastern Wisconsin. The fifth of seven children born to a Menominee medicine woman, Raymond grew up in a caring and stable household until his father's death in 1933 at the height

of the Great Depression. Unable to make ends meet, Margaret Kaquatosh sent nine-year-old Raymond to the Menominee Boarding School at Keshena. After his return home a year later, Raymond worked various odd jobs to help provide for his family. During the winter of 1935 he encountered a lone timber wolf that he tamed and befriended. The wolf, whom Raymond named Kernel, became a close companion and protector for the next 20 years. Following U.S. entry into World War II, Raymond enlisted in the Marine Corps and served in the South Pacific, where he was wounded in action and contracted malaria. Upon his demobilization and return home, Raymond attended high school in Wausau. There he met and married his wife, Elaine. In 1947, at Elaine's urging, Raymond entered flight school; in August of that year he became one of the first Menominee Indians to earn a pilot's license.

Little Hawk and the Lone Wolf provides an important Native American perspective on the trials and tribulations many midwesterners faced during the Great Depression and World War II eras. Although he was the occasional victim of racism and racially inspired stereotyping, Kaquatosh also experienced compassion, respect, and kindness from boarding school personnel, military officials, and hospital staff. His memoir is invariably upbeat and optimistic. Because of the graphic nature of some of his wartime recollections and periodic irreverent humor, the book is not appropriate for young children but would certainly be suitable for high schoolers and above.

Sounds of the New Deal: The Federal Music Project in the West, by Peter Gough. Music in American Life. Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2015. xvi, 259 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$50.00 hardcover.

Reviewer Kenneth J. Bindas is professor of history and chair of the History Department at Kent State University. His books include *All of This Music Belongs to the Nation: The WPA's Federal Music Project and American Society, 1935-1939* (1996).

Sounds of the New Deal is an interesting and informative book about the WPA's Federal Music Project (FMP) and its influence and effect on the American West. In it Peter Gough argues that "the WPA music programs in the West left behind an enduring legacy that has shaped the region's social, cultural, political, and even historical progress to the present day" (88).

Many sections of the book are enlightening. The discussion of the FMP in Colorado, Utah, Oregon, and Washington best captures the essence of Gough's argument, as he does well in that chapter to define what he means by the West and how the FMP projects in those states

exemplified that definition. Also, his discussions of Paul Lawrence Dunbar and William Grant Still resonate with the FMP ideal of inclusion. The same holds true for the section on *Take Your Choice*, produced by the Northern California Project in late 1936. In those sections and others the writing is clear and focused.

However, *Sounds of the New Deal* suffers from general overstatements. On page 5, for example, Gough writes that the FMP “*can* only be understood through a regional lens” (italics his). Later he adds that only by looking at the FMP through that lens can it be understood because of the “preeminence of regionalist thought during the Depression era” (192). While regionalism was significant, this assertion lacks credibility for several reasons. First, although Gough does define his notion of the West in the chapter identified above, he devotes a significant amount of space to discussing the FMP in the South, the Plains, and even the Northeast, suggesting a far more national program. A regional or even local study of the FMP or any New Deal program may certainly add to our understanding of its operation and effect, but that is *not* the *only* legitimate way to study it. Second, the FMP was a *federal* project until it transferred more control to states in 1939. Until then, localities, states, and regions had to get approval from the federal office before any activities could start. In fact, Gough discusses those negotiations in detail, particularly regarding California, New Mexico, Charles Seeger, and folk music, all of which reinforce the level of control and oversight by the federal office. So to suggest that federal direction was not a keystone of the FMP or any New Deal project from 1933 until 1939 ignores the complex battles FDR, as well as national directors like Hopkins, Fletcher, Perkins, and many other New Deal leaders faced from governors, members of Congress, and local administrators. Gough also seems unsure of what the FMP as a regional exercise promoted. Often it seems as though he is advocating the inclusionist vision of the New Deal, especially when comparing the FMP’s activities to the ideas of the new western history movement. At other times he links the western region’s FMP to the ideals of the Popular Front, suggesting that the FMP in the West “best expressed the powerful Popular Front ideals that enveloped the expanding New Deal coalition” (9).

Sounds of the New Deal does succeed in challenging the reader. Gough makes good use of sources to weave a passionate and driven narrative. That being the case, perhaps one can overlook some of the grandiose claims and take the book for what it is—a detailed examination of the FMP’s activities in the area west of the Rocky Mountains.

A South Dakota Country School Experience, by William E. Lass. Mankato: Minnesota Heritage Publishing, 2014. viii, 79 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes. \$8.00 hardcover.

Reviewer Paul Theobald is dean of the School of Education at Buena Vista University. He is the author of *Call School: Rural Education in the Midwest to 1918* (1995) and *Education Now: How Re-thinking America's Past Can Change Its Future* (2009).

William Lass has produced an autobiographical account of his country school experiences in Union County, South Dakota, a county that borders the state of Iowa north of Sioux City. The reader is introduced to the Lass family and neighbors who sent children to District School #46 in Union County, more commonly referred to as Emmett School. As an accomplished historian, Lass is able to put his country school experiences into the larger context of rural life amid the Great Depression and, subsequently, World War II. In the process, he covers a remarkable range of topics, from area wildlife to fluctuating rural demographics. He is at his best, however, in his meticulous description of students, their teachers, and the school subjects that engaged them both.

This very readable little book demonstrates the significance of local history for more broad-sweeping historical narratives. While there is much here of value to professional historians, there is much, too, for the general public interested in the country school experience. Unresolved debates crop up in this account of schooling in a small South Dakota township. For instance, was the rote nature of recitation pedagogy a sign of how backward rural schools were, as some have insisted, or was it in fact a proven approach to instructing a range of students with widely varied ages, interests, and abilities? Lass touches on issues of this sort while also describing the everyday episodes at school or on the schoolyard that keep the account vivid, sometimes humorous, and always interesting.

Prairie Forge: The Extraordinary Story of the Nebraska Scrap Metal Drive of World War II, by James J. Kimble. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014. xv, 217 pp. Illustrations, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$19.95 paperback.

Reviewer Lisa Payne Ossian is a history instructor at Des Moines Area Community College. She is the author of *The Home Fronts of Iowa, 1939-1945* (2009) and *The Forgotten Generation: American Children and World War II* (2011).

About 15 years ago, when I presented my research on Iowa scrap metal drives to an open audience at the Missouri Valley History Conference in Omaha, the panel chair's critique of my paper cited contemporary research suggesting that little of World War II's donated scrap had been

effectively utilized for war munitions. At that point a determined, elegant 90-year-old woman rose to her feet in defense of Nebraska and World War II scrap metal drives, dramatically stating, "I'll have you know that every bit of scrap was used for the war effort."

Author James Kimble begins his book *Prairie Forge* with a similar dramatic flourish and pronouncement that commands the audience to pay attention. Kimble, deeply believing in the cause but crafting a book with a balanced perspective, maintains that sense of urgency throughout his sharply researched book. How did Nebraska take such an unlikely lead in a rather lackluster national iron scrap campaign within the center of a country ill prepared with the resources and labor needed to fight a total global war?

Kimble's work of 158 pages contains a number of valuable elements: 21 black-and-white illustrations of various topics, six chapters framed by "Home Front, Battlefront" as introduction and epilogue (revisited), a ten-page bibliography, a detailed index, 36 pages of research notes, and an appendix on every county in Nebraska with charted summer and combined contributions per capita. The book is factual and energetic. Throughout the text Kimble uses catchy phrases such as the chapter subtitle "how not to win the war" as well as the "persuasive magic" of Henry Doorly. Kimble understands the importance of popular culture, such as the Donald Duck campaign, and he details scrap appeals, blitzes, and strategies while capturing the constantly rhyming rhythm of World War II's advertising efforts for home-front activities.

The book focuses on Henry Doorly of the *Omaha World Herald*. Doorly developed the Nebraska Plan at the prompting of his wife to prove that a good idea with a relentless statewide newspaper and radio campaign could be extraordinarily effective. Kimble states that Doorly crafted iron scrap campaign themes such as "fact and fancy," "competition and camaraderie," "tractors and tricycles." "Too frequently," Kimble writes, "citizens on the home front and soldiers on the battlefield seemed like they were worlds apart. In the wake of the statewide drive and its unforgettable crescendo, however, Doorly and his staff came to believe that there was a possible solution to the home front's malaise" (121). Kimble then explains Nebraska's rapid race to the top. "In this case of scrap collection, the state's newspapers had used an all-out editorial and publicity blitz to entice, cajole, and push readers into the contest, and before long the competitive citizens had become intensely conscious of the need for scrap" (121).

This successful book's author never loses sight of his mission. As he concludes in his epilogue, "The aim of this book has been to contend that, on one level, Doorly's drive was a success in gathering sufficient

amounts of a desperately needed raw material at a critical point. On a second level, Kimble argues that the campaign was successful in altering the experience of the war in such a way that civilians were able to see themselves as home front soldiers" (147). As for that critique of World War II iron scrap drives, I believe my 90-year-old defender would have wholeheartedly agreed with Kimble.

Gathering the Potawatomi Nation: Revitalization and Identity, by Christopher Wetzel. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015. xii, 196 pp. Illustrations, maps, graphs, tables, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 hardcover.

Reviewer John P. Bowes is associate professor of history at Eastern Kentucky University. He is the author of *Exiles and Pioneers: Eastern Indians in the Trans-Mississippi West* (2007).

Nation is a familiar word, one that at first glance appears easy to define. Yet in the cultural and historical contexts of colonialism, indigenous communities, and the twenty-first century, *nation* as a word, concept, and assertion of political identity takes on greater complexity. In *Gathering the Potawatomi Nation*, Christopher Wetzel addresses those very concerns in a clearly articulated analysis that illustrates how the concept of nationhood currently manifests among the disparate Potawatomi communities in North America. Most important, Wetzel argues that contemporary Potawatomi expressions and conceptions of nationhood reflect, more than anything political or economic, "a decisive shift toward an affirmative collective self-identification" (137). The Potawatomis have found in the concept of nationhood a way to rebuild, maintain, and convey vital social and cultural connections.

The book is divided into two sections, titled "Roots of the Nation" and "Routes to the Nation." This organizational structure illustrates Wetzel's emphasis on how decisions made by contemporary Potawatomi men and women exist within their specific historical experiences and cultural traditions. For the Potawatomis, that historical context finds its most common expression in two events: the Chicago Treaty of 1833 and the Trail of Death that took place later that same decade. Wetzel explains that whereas the treaty symbolized fragmentation and then bore the blame for interband conflict during the Indian Claims Commission hearings of the twentieth century, a more recent emphasis on government forced removals and diaspora has oriented the larger Potawatomi community toward present and future opportunities for reunion.

The path to creating those connections and building the Potawatomi Nation began on the individual level and continues through the efforts of national brokers, men whose "life trajectories, cultural fluency,

structural position, and gender" (90) provide them the means to build networks that span the nine communities located in the United States and Canada. Just as important, because of the emphasis on cultural and social connections grounded in language revitalization organizations and the annual Potawatomi Gathering that started in 1994, this evolving Potawatomi nationhood has not competed with the political and economic interests of those nine distinct sovereign governments.

This is a critical point that rests at the core of the book. Wetzel emphasizes that "changing economic and political circumstances, rather than being directly causal, create conditions of possibility for the Potawatomi Nation to develop" (72). The Potawatomis are building a nation that relies on their history and culture, not one built on external notions of economic and political institutions. Wetzel directly confronts this idea near the end of the book when he writes that at "the community level, the Potawatomi national renaissance is a shift away from the arbitrary imposition of 'tribes' by non-Native governments" (137). Yet in this relatively brief book he does not pursue that idea in much depth. It would be particularly interesting to put his analysis in conversation with Glen Couthard's recent study, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (2014).

Wetzel developed his analysis in collaboration with the Potawatomis, and the inclusion of their responses to his analysis substantiates the conclusions he draws. My primary critique of *Gathering the Potawatomi Nation* arises from his comparison of the Potawatomi experience to that of other fragmented Native communities to explain why the Potawatomis in particular have experienced this revitalization. Why choose the Cherokees, Creeks, and Seminoles and not another Great Lakes community? Yet that question does not overshadow what is ultimately a very good introduction to contemporary expressions of a Potawatomi collective identity and the need to place indigenous conceptions of nationhood within proper historical and cultural contexts.

Boom, Bust, Exodus: The Rust Belt, the Maquilas, and a Tale of Two Cities, by Chad Broughton. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. 399 pp. Illustrations, notes on method, notes, index. \$29.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Ralph Scharnau, a U.S. history instructor, recently retired from Northeast Iowa Community College, Peosta. His publications and ongoing research and writing focus on Dubuque and Iowa labor history.

Twenty years ago, Daniel Nelson's book, *Farm and Factory: Workers in the Midwest, 1880–1990* (1995), synthesized the secondary literature on the two dominant economic institutions in America's heartland. The

book reviewed here, Chad Broughton's *Boom, Bust, Exodus*, takes a different approach. Broughton makes interviews the foundation of his study and narrates the impact of globalization on the working class in Galesburg, Illinois, and Reynosa, a border town in Mexico.

Broughton's book describes two urban areas and the people inhabiting them: displaced Rust Belt factory employees in Galesburg and migrant farm laborers in Reynosa. Appliance manufacturing connects the two places, with Galesburg losing workers and Reynosa gaining them. Workers found their lives transformed by the forces of multinational capitalism.

The author constructs his narrative around talks with workers, managers, and union leaders in both locations. He read newspapers and immersed himself in the local culture. The economic upheaval revealed itself in a spectrum of human reactions—production and community pride, anger and vulnerability, family and gender shifts, hope and resilience.

Broughton sketches the historical context for his study. The post-World War II era produced shared prosperity, with profits increasing and wages boosted by productivity gains. The period from 1945 to 1975 witnessed a kind of golden age for unions as well. During the boom years, consumers purchased modern kitchen appliances. Galesburg became known as "Appliance City," with Maytag's side-by-side refrigerators as the leading brand. By 1974, Galesburg was booming, with more than 10,000 unionized manufacturing jobs in a town of just 36,000 people. Appliance production at the Galesburg plant soared. About 5,000 people worked there in its heyday and enjoyed good pay and benefits. Appliances produced by Admiral and Magic Chef dominated until Maytag, the washing machine producer headquartered in Newton, Iowa, took over in 1986.

Consolidation within the industry combined with competition from domestic giants like General Electric and foreign companies like Haier brought authoritarian management, a singular focus on cost cutting, and demands for union concessions. A strike was barely averted in 2002, and a few months later the company announced the closure of the Galesburg plant. With the Galesburg plant shuttered in 2004, former Maytag employees struggled to secure a livelihood. Some found decent jobs with railroads, hospitals, and schools while many others eked out an existence with the help of public assistance programs and part-time work.

Maytag reopened operations in Reynosa, Mexico. Nearly a decade later, in 2012, the company's Newton headquarters was sold for one dollar. While the middle of America deindustrialized, the industrializa-

tion of Mexican borderlands was well under way. In Reynosa and other border towns, migrants filled factories and lived in slums.

The surge in border manufacturing shifted employment from rural to urban areas. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) of 1994 took away protective import tariffs and speeded up the loss of Mexico's small-scale farming. Subsidized U.S. grain flooded the Mexican market and swept rural laborers off the land. The displaced workers headed for the booming border factories as the only hope for a livelihood. Low wages, high turnover, and deskilling characterized the Mexican labor scene. The rise in wages, per capita income, and trade promised by NAFTA promoters on both sides of the Rio Grande has proved largely illusory.

While Broughton's ethnographic study tells the story of how multinational corporations changed the lives and landscapes of two cities — Galesburg and Reynosa — it also provides a unique and moving account of the human consequences of economic globalism. "With economic globalism," Broughton writes, "companies like Maytag had found a way to slough off not only union wages, pension obligations, taxes, and regulations, but also any sense of obligation to the place where they made their money" (155).

Broughton believes that America's rising inequality results not from inevitable and intractable market forces but rather from a political system that rewards businesses and harms workers. By contrast, European countries have publicly funded labor and social policies in the areas of wages, health care, skills-building, retirement, and unemployment. Such policies can provide employers with flexibility and workers with more economic security.

The book closes without the benefit of a collective profile of the workers. Yet Broughton remains true to his goal of chronicling workers' views on economic issues. Nuanced, moderate, and insightful best describe the account.

Tangible Things: Making History through Objects, by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, Ivan Gaskell, Sara J. Schechner, and Sarah Anne Carter, with photographs by Samantha S. B. van Gerbig. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. xvii, 259 pp. Illustrations, appendix, notes, index, companion website. \$39.95 paperback.

Reviewer Erika Doss is professor of American studies at the University of Notre Dame. Her most recent book is *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America* (2010).

Midwestern artist Scott Hocking explores the artifacts of modern urban detritus. Excavating discarded objects found in the postindustrial ruins

of cities like Detroit and St. Louis, many located in landscapes where Native American earthworks and burial mounds once stood, Hocking reuses these things to make monumental, site-specific, and temporary installations. “Detroit Midden Mound” (2008), for example, featured a huge pile of rusted machine parts and other tools reassembled on the floor of a deserted automobile factory, while “Glove Mound” (2010) consisted of thousands of industrial-strength rubber gloves heaped together in the abandoned parking lot of an empty chemical plant in north St. Louis. Making art out of stuff he discovers in destroyed and defunct places, thereby colliding the histories and memories of the past with the present, Hocking prompts us to ask what we value over time. What things do we consider worth keeping, and why? What do the things we keep and collect tell us about ourselves and how we understand the world?

Tangible Things probes the same questions and considers many more. A coauthored book that began as the catalog for an exhibition at Harvard University in spring 2011, which itself originated in a series of small research seminars conducted by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich and Ivan Gaskell that used material culture “as entry points into history” (xi), *Tangible Things* aims to understand the past through its material and physical records, its art and artifacts. Examining a diverse range and body of material sources – from pre-fifteenth-century textile fragments found in the Spiro Mounds in Oklahoma and twentieth-century walrus ivory carvings made by Inuit artists in Canada to the oil paint-encrusted palette used by American artist John Singer Sargent in the late nineteenth century and a soft red cotton dress worn by a Radcliffe College field-hockey player in 1925 – the authors of *Tangible Things* consider “how Westerners have distinguished, named, sorted, grouped, gathered, and subsequently deployed material things in order to make knowledge claims about them and the emergent concepts their users have associated with them” (7–8).

Their inquiries focus on items drawn from 17 different collections at Harvard, an institution that has been collecting things for almost 400 years (the university was founded in 1636 and its Museum of Comparative Zoology alone holds more than 21 million specimens today), but their mandate invites scholars in multiple disciplines to seriously consider how physical objects are relevant in today’s digital age. Beyond situating things as meaningful markers of how particular social, cultural, and political attitudes are shaped and directed, their project further critiques how things shape and define disciplinary categories. Driven by a healthy degree of museological soul-searching, the authors of *Tangible Things* deconstruct how institutional collecting practices in

the nineteenth century, for example, rigidly distinguished certain things from others, separating “art” objects from handcrafted goods, anthropological artifacts, and scientific specimens. Ultimately, this historically informed project aims to synthesize the relationships that exist among objects, classification, and institutional power in interesting and provocative ways.

Tangible Things features an introduction and four sections: “Things in Place,” “Things Unplaced,” “Things out of Place,” and “Things in Stories—Stories in Things.” Each section consists of case studies from the “six fundamental categories” (15) into which things have been classified since the nineteenth century: anthropology and archaeology, art, books and manuscripts, history, natural history, and science and medicine. If they reinscribe such categories, the authors also destabilize them by discussing the multivalent and mutable character of things—juxtaposing seemingly unrelated items like corncob pipes and computers, for example, and critiquing abiding cultural assumptions of distinctions between “art” and “craft” in their scrutiny of a ceramic plate painted circa 1878–1882 by Cheyenne warrior Nock-ko-ist (Bear’s Heart) for the Gilded Age tourist market. Samantha S. B. van Gerbig’s color photographs significantly enhance the project, and her essay explaining the difficulties of documenting often banal or mundane things (“fill the frame,” she advises, [194]) is, like all the essays in this collection, engaging and well written. A companion website (requiring a password) gives readers access to 406 alternative and enlarged images not included in the text.

Importantly, *Tangible Things* asks how university and college museums—and by extension archives, libraries, and museums of all kinds—might work more efficaciously to engage the public in an understanding of material-based histories. Hierarchies of taste and value remain dominant today. Recognizing how “tangible things”—from urban industrial detritus to the objects collected in Harvard’s museums—contribute to those hierarchies is crucial to a critically informed citizenry.

Water and What We Know: Following the Roots of a Northern Life, by Karen Babine. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015. xi, 219 pp. \$17.95 paperback.

Reviewer Barbara J. Dilly is associate professor of anthropology at Creighton University and an Iowa resident. Her research and writing focus on, among other things, rural communities and sustainability.

Karen Babine argues for a revisionist cultural history of the northern Midwest in terms of natural environments, landscapes, and climates.

Her collection of essays blends cultural mythology with hard science in an expansive ethic of place following the perspectives of iconic ecologists such as Wendell Berry and Wes Jackson. Babine outlines an ecological methodology for recording personal and communal experiences and meanings to help us understand that our landscapes are not just physical places but mental and emotional as well. She gets our attention with experiences as emotionally deep as encountering apples, blizzards, and 500-year floods—all part of the ecological and psychological balances that are both life-giving and life-taking. As she retells the stories of weather disasters and their emotional effects on local histories and identities, she reveals an intricate narrative of landscapes we cannot control. Babine says we aren't telling our whole history if we leave out such events and only include what humans do to master their environments. Babine asks existential and spiritual questions about the value and knowledge found in local ecologies, calling human residents to more in-depth sustainable relationships with land, water, and, most of all, the weather. Through story after story, Babine reveals that it is the power of nature to shape culture that we need to comprehend. Her critical contribution is that we need to learn to think of the natural and the cultural as inseparable in order to expand our ecological consciousness and knowledge to face our futures.

Whispers and Shadows: A Naturalist's Memoir, by Jerry Apps. Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2015. xiv, 145 pp. Bibliography. \$22.95 hardcover.

Reviewer James A. Pritchard teaches in the Department of Natural Resource Ecology & Management at Iowa State University. He is coauthor of *A Green and Permanent Land* (2001).

With *Whispers and Shadows*, rural historian Jerry Apps offers an insightful memoir, inviting bibliophiles to visit the trails on Roshara, his 120-acre family farm in central Wisconsin, as well as places farther afield. A keen observer, Apps notes historical changes in the landscape, comprehensively interpreting a diverse natural history in pond, prairie, woodlot, and wildlife, including the endangered Karner blue butterfly.

Through actions, the author's father expressed a deep appreciation of nature. His greatest gift was an admonition to look in the shadows and listen for the whispers—to sit quietly and wait patiently, witnessing nature's subtle fascinations. The land, writes Apps, is "something that can be loved," yet it "wants to be respected, honored, and valued" (116, 130).

Apps advises that nature is found all around us: in rural landscapes, indeed, "in your own backyard" (104). People live in relationship with nature, he notes, as well as with one another. Among a lifetime of memories, his boyhood introduction to Morty Oliphant, a recluse who had "a special way with wild animals," stands out (83). Apps's eyes opened to human and animal neighbors, bringing him an empathy for all life.

In discussing nature writers, the author's literary sources of inspiration become apparent. Many are grounded in the Midwest, including Loren Eiseley, Gaylord Nelson, and Sigurd Olson. Apps also discusses disconnecting from a hurried life and enhancing one's connection with nature through journaling. Readers will watch for signs of nature with heightened awareness after engaging with this thoughtful and handsomely produced book.

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