

State Historical Society of Iowa

Recommended Readings in Iowa History

This list is an impressionistic, subjective selection of standard works in Iowa history. This list contains books only. For articles, see Marvin Bergman, *Iowa History Reader* (Ames, 1996), and the footnotes in its introduction as well as the bibliographical notes following each article. We've picked the selections we believe to be the most important works in various areas in state history, recognizing that others could also be included. We've assigned categories also recognizing that many articles appear on this list largely because they cross boundaries and make connections among several fields of inquiry. Suggestions are welcome.

GENERAL

Bennett, Mary. *An Iowa Album: A Photographic History, 1860-1920* (Iowa City, '90).

Bergman, Marvin, ed. *Iowa History Reader* (Ames, 1996). A supplementary reader selecting from among the best interpretive articles and books on Iowa history from the past 30 years. Bibliographical essays following each essay offer additional suggestions for further reading.

Dawson, Patricia, and David Hudson. *Iowa History and Culture: A Bibliography of Materials Published between 1952 and 1986* (Ames, 1989). See also the update through 1991 in 3 issues in the *Annals of Iowa* 52 (1993). Use this to find Iowa history materials on particular topics. It's arranged by broad topic and also has an excellent index.

Sage, Leland. *A History of Iowa* (Ames, 1974). Prior to the publication of Schwieder's survey, the standard text on Iowa history. Still fills gaps in political history not covered by Schwieder.

Schwieder, Dorothy. *Iowa: The Middle Land* (Ames, 1996). Quite simply, the best available survey of Iowa history.

Schwieder, Dorothy. "Iowa: The Middle Land." In *Heartland: Comparative Histories of the Midwestern States* (Bloomington, IN, 1988). [Also in *Iowa History Reader*.] Summarizes in 20 pages the key themes in Iowa history. **If you only have an hour to read one thing on Iowa history, read this.**

Wall, Joseph. *Iowa: A Bicentennial History* (New York, 1978). A series of short personal essays on important themes in Iowa history.

STATE, LOCAL, & REGIONAL

Cayton, Andrew R. L., and Peter S. Onuf. *The Midwest and the Nation: Rethinking the*

History of an American Region (Bloomington, IN, 1990). Largely an extended historiographical essay and therefore not an easy read, but it's only 125 pages, and it's rewarding for the patient. Deals primarily with the Old Northwest (Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin), but much of it applies to Iowa as well.

Cronon, William. *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York, 1991). A long, difficult, but extremely rewarding book about how people transformed the landscape as they built a region (a hinterland) to support Chicago's development. Cronon focuses particularly on grain farming, lumber, and meatpacking. If you don't have time to read the book, read "Perspectives on *Nature's Metropolis*: A Book Forum," in the *Annals of Iowa* 51 (Summer 1992), 480-525.

Madison, James, ed., *Heartland: Comparative Histories of the Midwestern States* (Bloomington, IN, 1988). A series of well-written 20-30-page essays on the history of each of 12 midwestern states. Nearly all claim that their state is the most typically midwestern, and therefore the most typically American.

Marty, Myron, and David Kyvig. *Nearby History* (Nashville, 1982). A primer on the value of local history, with how-to suggestions. Marty and Kyvig have also edited a series of valuable, individually authored books showing how to do the history of, for example, houses, public places, farms, schools, churches, utilities & public works.

Shortridge, James R. *The Middle West: Its Meaning in American Culture* (Lawrence, KS, 1989). A cultural geographer's account of the changing and present image and understandings of the Midwest. A short, interesting book that's fairly easy to read.

AFRICAN AMERICANS

Bergmann, Leola Nelson, *The Negro in Iowa* (Iowa City, 1949, 1969).

Outside In: African-American History in Iowa, 1838-2000 (Des Moines, 2001).

Schwieder, Dorothy, Elmer Schwieder, and Joseph Hraba, *Buxton: Work and Racial Equality in a Coal Mining Community* (Ames, 1987).

EDUCATION

Reynolds, David R. *There Goes the Neighborhood: Rural School Consolidation at the Grassroots in Early Twentieth-Century Iowa* (Iowa City, 1999).

ENVIRONMENTAL

Conard, Rebecca. *Places of Quiet Beauty: Parks, Preserves, and Environmentalism* (Iowa City, 1997).

IMMIGRATION & ETHNICITY

Gjerde, Jon. *The Minds of the West: The Ethnocultural Evolution in the Rural Midwest, 1830-1917* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1997).

INDIANS

Bataille, Gretchen, David Gradwohl, and Charles Silet, eds. *The Worlds between Two Rivers: Perspectives on American Indians in Iowa* (Ames, 1978).

McTaggart, Fred. *Wolf That I Am: In Search of the Red Earth People* (1976; reprint, Norman, OK, 1984).

White, Richard. *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region* (New York, 1993).

LABOR

Fink, Deborah. *Cutting Into the Meatpacking Line: Workers and Change in the Rural Midwest* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1998).

Nelson, Daniel. *Farm and Factory: Workers in the Midwest, 1880–1990* (Bloomington, IN, 1995).

Stromquist, Shelton. *Solidarity and Survival: An Oral History of Iowa Labor in the Twentieth Century* (Iowa City, 1993).

Warren, Wilson. *Struggling with "Iowa's Pride": Labor Relations, Unionism, and Politics in the Rural Midwest since 1877* (Iowa City, 2000).

LITERATURE

Burns, E. Bradford. *Kinship with the Land: Regionalist Thought in Iowa, 1894–1942* (Iowa City, 1996)

Weber, Ronald. *The Midwestern Ascendancy in American Writing* (Bloomington, IN, '92).

POLITICS & LAW

Acton, Richard Lord, and Patricia Nassif Acton. *To Go Free: A Treasury of Iowa's Legal Heritage* (Ames, 1995).

Cook, Robert. *Baptism of Fire: The Republican Party in Iowa, 1838–1878* (Ames, 1994).

Culver, John C., and John Hyde. *American Dreamer: The Life and Times of Henry A. Wallace* (New York, 2000).

Dykstra, Robert R. *Bright Radical Star: Black Freedom and White Supremacy on the Hawkeye Frontier* (Cambridge, MA, 1993).

Jensen, Richard J. *The Winning of the Midwest: Social and Political Conflict, 1886–1896*

(Chicago, 1971).

Larew, James. *A Party Reborn: The Democrats of Iowa, 1950–1974* (Iowa City, 1980).

Ostler, Jeffrey. *Prairie Populism: The Fate of Agrarian Radicalism in Kansas, Nebraska, and Iowa, 1880–1892* (Lawrence, KS, 1993).

Winebrenner, Hugh. *The Iowa Precinct Caucuses: The Making of a Media Event*, 2d ed. (Ames, 1998).

RELIGION

Tucker, Cynthia Grant. *Prophetic Sisterhood: Liberal Women Ministers of the Frontier, 1880–1930* (Boston, 1990).

RURAL & AGRICULTURAL

Bogue, Allan. *From Prairie to Cornbelt: Farming on the Illinois and Iowa Prairies in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago, 1963).

Danbom, David. *The Resisted Revolution: Urban America and the Industrialization of Agriculture, 1900–1930* (Ames, 1979).

Friedberger, Mark. *Farm Families and Change in Twentieth-Century America* (Lexington, KY, 1988).

Hudson, John. *Making the Corn Belt: A Geographical History of Middle-Western Agriculture* (Bloomington, IN, 1994).

Jellison, Katherine. *Entitled to Power: Farm Women and Technology, 1913–1963* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1993).

Kirschner, Don. *City and Country: Rural Responses to Urbanization in the 1920s* (Westport, CT, 1970).

Neth, Mary C. *Preserving The Family Farm: Women, Community, and the Foundation of Agribusiness in the Midwest, 1900–1940* (Baltimore, 1995).

Ross, Earle D. *Iowa Agriculture: An Historical Survey* (Iowa City, 1951).

TOWNS & TOWN DEVELOPMENT

Atherton, Lewis. *Main Street on the Middle Border* (1954; repr., Bloomington, IN, 1984).

Mahoney, Timothy. *River Towns in the Great West: The Structure of Provincial Urbanization in the Midwest, 1820–1870* (New York, 1990).

Mahoney, Timothy. *Provincial Lives: Middle-Class Experience in the Antebellum Middle*