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In This Issue

BARBARA CHING, associate professor of English at the University of Memphis, describes and analyzes the clocks brothers Frank and Joseph Bily carved in northeastern Iowa between 1913 and 1948. She shows how the Bily and their work, usually seen as parochial and bucolic, actually engaged the modern world, bridging the regional and cosmopolitan and the timeless and timely.

PHILLIP J. HUTCHISON, assistant professor of communications at the University of Kentucky, narrates the career of the popular Iowa and California children's television personality Jay Alexander, better known as television cowboy Marshal J.

Hutchison recovers Alexander's lost history, assesses his impact on Iowans, and tries to explain why such a highly visible popular culture icon could disappear from Iowa's social consciousness as Alexander did.

Front Cover

Jay Alexander, in his persona as children's television personality Marshal J, greets some of his young fans in about 1963. For more on Alexander's career as Marshal J, see Phillip Hutchison's article in this issue. Photo courtesy Kate Yoemans.

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“This World of Ours”: The Bily Clocks and Cosmopolitan Regionalism, 1913–1948

BARBARA CHING

BETWEEN 1913 AND 1948, brothers Frank and Joseph Bily (pronounced bee-lee) carved 19 massive wooden clocks (the largest measure over nine feet tall and weigh up to 500 pounds) on their Ridgeway, Iowa, farm, about four miles north of Spillville and twelve miles west of Decorah. Founded in 1849 by Joseph Spielman, a German immigrant, Spillville was settled in the 1850s and '60s by Czech immigrants, including John Bily and Mary Andera, parents of Frank and Joseph. In 1893 Jan Joseph Kovarik, Spillville native and student of Czech composer Antonin Dvořák, persuaded his teacher to take respite from the urban intensity of his American sojourn at New York's National Conservatory of Music. Promising him a Czech-speaking population and a rural setting evocative of the Bohemian countryside, Kovarik brought the composer and his family to Spillville for a splendid summer.¹ While in Spillville, Dvořák edited his most

I thank the State Historical Society of Iowa for a grant that allowed me to spend several days in Spillville and in the State Historical Society of Iowa libraries. In particular, I am grateful to Kevin Knoot and Mary Bennett at the library in Iowa City and Rosie Springer in Des Moines.

1. After returning to New York City, Dvořák said, “Spillville is an ideal place. I would like to spend the rest of my days there.” Juanita J. Loven, *Dvorak in Spillville: 100 Days, 100 Years Ago, 1893–1993* (Spillville, 1993), 45. For a detailed history of Spillville through 1900, see Cyril M. Klimesh, *They Came to This Place: A History of Spillville, Iowa and Its Czech Settlers*, 2nd ed. (Sebastapol, CA, 1992). See also Becky Neuzil and Beatrice Sbiral, *The Quasiquicentennial History Book, 1860–1985: Spillville, Iowa* (n.p., 1985).

THE ANNALS OF IOWA 68 (Spring 2009). © The State Historical Society of Iowa, 2009.

famous work, the *New World Symphony*, which would have its premiere at Carnegie Hall that winter. Although Joseph (1880–1964) and Frank (1884–1965) were young boys at the time, Spillville’s association with Dvořák shaped their careers as well as their town’s history.

Voracious readers, Joseph and Frank Bily received no formal education beyond the fifth grade. Museum guides tell visitors that the brothers never traveled farther than 20 miles from their farm near Ridgeway, Iowa, although a photograph on display at the museum shows that they had a Model T.² They spoke Czech at home and, according to local lore, seldom socialized, although they did attend Saint Wenceslaus Catholic Church in Spillville. Neither brother ever married, but they had family responsibilities to their two siblings: a younger sister, Anna, also unmarried, who collected the entrance fees to their museum; and Johnny, the oldest child, who was mentally disabled. They farmed with their father until the late 1920s, when they began to rent their land to other farmers. Johnny died in 1932, their father died in 1941, and Anna died in 1943. They lived in the farmhouse until their mother died in 1949; then they moved to Spillville. They worked as carpenters in the area, and at times they worked for the county to help pay their property taxes. They always carved, even as schoolboys. Frank’s schoolroom desk, transformed by his knife into a plaque depicting the holy family framed by vines and ogives, shows remarkable skill. As adults, they took up clock case carving in 1913 after a neighbor asked them to help install a clock mechanism in one of his carving projects.³

2. The car appears to be a 1919 model. See Beverly Rae Kimes et al., *Standard Catalog of American Cars, 1805–1942*, 3rd ed. (Iola, WI, 1996), 582. I thank my colleague James Newcomb for this reference.

3. Much of this biographical information comes from the pamphlet developed by the Bily Clock Museum, *The Bily Clocks of Spillville Iowa* (n.p., n.d.), 2. The current (unnumbered) edition was “revised and written by Carol Riehle” in 2001. Although earlier versions of the pamphlet are unsigned, Duane Hutchinson, in *Bily Brothers: Wood Carvers and Clock Makers* (Lincoln, NE, 1993), xxiii, credits Blanche Beall of the *West Union Gazette*. Hutchinson consulted all available documentation to tell the story of the brothers by imagining the diary their mother, Mary Bily, would have written. This creative nonfiction does an excellent job of placing the Bily’s work in the context of important international, regional, and local events. Hutchinson’s discussion of the clocks focuses on chronology and description rather than interpretation.

In 1947 the Bilys moved their clocks to the building on Spillville's Main Street in which Dvořák had lived. They eventually left the collection to the village, stipulating that it be kept intact and permanently housed there. The site is now called the Bily Clock Museum, although it also includes a Dvořák exhibit on the second floor. With this relocation, the Bilys allied their work with the European cultural traditions that Dvořák epitomized. But now the economic and geographic isolation of Spillville, where time, it seems, stands still, overshadows the Bilys' ambition, tacitly placing the brothers in a provincial town where they whittled away the hours, unlike, say, the big city-bound bright young Iowans imagined by the Bilys' contemporary, Cedar Rapids-born cosmopolite Carl Van Vechten, in his 1924 novel the *Tattooed Countess*. The narrator explicitly uses the image of woodcarving to describe "this provincial community where . . . the young went away as soon as possible to carve out their lives elsewhere."⁴ Indeed, such an exodus rapidly diminished the rural population throughout the twentieth century; as early as the 1920 census, over half of Americans lived in urban areas (a benchmark not reached in Iowa until the 1950 census).

From its inception, nearly all of the museum's visitors came from elsewhere to see the clocks. For this audience, the museum's curatorial materials accent nostalgia for a slower-paced experience of time. The objects displayed on the museum's second-floor landing reinforce this nostalgia, including "unusual items of pioneer time" and "donated memories" from anonymous visitors. The pamphlet sold at the museum also stresses the backward glance, asserting that "one can easily turn back the clock to the days when Antonin Dvořák found peace and inspiration in the Spillville scene." Offering a chronological and descriptive discussion of the creation of the clocks, this pamphlet presents the Bilys as farmers first and hobbyists, carving to while away long winters, second.⁵

4. Carl Van Vechten, *The Tattooed Countess* (1924; reprint, Iowa City, 1987), 91.

5. *Bily Clocks of Spillville*, 2. Czech American essayist Patricia Hampl, who visited the museum to retrace Dvořák's steps, disappointedly catalogued the museum's jumble in *Spillville* (Minneapolis, 1987). "I move from case to case, forgetting Dvořák, carried on the pure wave of eccentricity. This is the human mind displaying itself, revealing its central capacity which turns out to be not curiosity, after all, but avidity" (67). Even though she disliked the museum,

Just as urbanization has shaped the way we see Spillville and the clock museum, the work of Grant Wood, a near contemporary of the Bilys (1891–1942), has shaped the way we see Iowa art and Iowa artists of this period. James M. Dennis has argued that “regionalism” served as a critical label that obscured significant modernist characteristics of Wood, Benton, and Curry (and blurred important distinctions among them).⁶ Yet art historians still focus on Wood’s antimodernism, and his work is framed that way for the art-viewing public. Writing for the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art’s 2005 Grant Wood retrospective, Wanda Corn argued that Wood’s art stages “narratives of confrontation” in which modern technology exerts an “invasive force” in the lives of his subjects.⁷ Likewise, the wall text in the gallery where *American Gothic* is displayed at the Art Institute of Chicago explains that “American Regionalists such as Grant Wood . . . eschewed European modernist innovation and instead employed a naturalistic and narrative style of painting that appealed to a broad audience.” Undoubtedly, Wood shaped his public image with a geographic contrast between milk pails and wine glasses that can readily be associated with a preference for the rural and the old-fashioned. In a 1936 interview with the *New York Herald Tribune*, Wood described his fruitless haunting of Parisian cafes in the 1920s; as he drank with his fellow aspiring artists, he says, “I realized that all the really good ideas I’d ever had came to me while I was milking a cow. So I went back to Iowa.”⁸

Although Wood’s self-conscious rusticity characterized the “artist in Iowa,”⁹ the Bilys, who were working only 120 miles away from Wood’s Cedar Rapids studio, showed little of his

HAMPL admired the Bilys’ work, calling the clocks “intricate wooden sculptures” and “clock-epics in wood” (60).

6. James M. Dennis, *Renegade Regionalists: The Modern Independence of Grant Wood, Thomas Hart Benton, and John Steuart Curry* (Madison, WI, 1998).

7. Wanda Corn, “Grant Wood: Uneasy Modernist,” in *Grant Wood’s Studio: Birthplace of American Gothic*, ed. Jane Milosch (Munich, 2005), 113.

8. Cited in Brady M. Roberts, “The European Roots of Regionalism: Grant Wood’s Stylistic Synthesis,” in *Grant Wood: An American Master Revealed*, ed. Brady Roberts et al. (San Francisco, 1995), 32.

9. *Artist in Iowa: A Life of Grant Wood* is the title of Darrell Garwood’s early mass-market biography (New York, 1944).

influence. Their clocks display an almost paradoxical blend of modernity, cosmopolitanism, and regionalism. Indeed, their clock collection underscores the extent to which terms such as *modern* and *regionalist* constrict what we see and understand about cultural production in this era. Immersed in representing the physical and historical manifestations of time, the Bilyes, unlike Wood, worked as if the urbane and the rustic, the cosmopolitan and the provincial, and the technological and the traditional were not mutually exclusive categories. Thus, rather than looking at the clocks as a hobby enabled by the cyclical time of agricultural labor, in this essay I interpret their themes and visual details to emphasize the brothers' relationship to modernity — their consciousness of living in a rapidly changing world as well as their critical exploration of modernity's implications. They used clocks, I argue, as a canvas for expressing and exploring the dramatically altered experience of time and space created by twentieth-century technology.

The Bilyes' use of timepieces and wood, instead of paint and brushes, bridged the regional and cosmopolitan and timeless and timely in two ways. Wood carving *without* clockwork has a long tradition in the Czech and Scandinavian cultures that predominated in northeast Iowa at the time.¹⁰ And, by 1913, when the brothers made their first clocks, mail-order catalogs offered an abundance of inexpensive, mass-produced clocks and watches — perhaps the very clock mechanisms that the Bilyes used to turn the hand-carved cases into functioning clocks.¹¹ The use of mass-produced mechanisms was evidently a deliberate choice since they had the skills to make the entire clock, including the clock works, by hand — as they did with a large, untitled tall case

10. On wood carving as a Czech tradition in Iowa, see Marianne Trejtnar Klinsky, "Czech Heritage," *The Iowan* 19 (December 1970), 12–15. For Norwegian traditions, see Darrell D. Henning, Marion J. Nelson, and Roger L. Welsch, eds., *Norwegian-American Wood Carving of the Upper Midwest: An Exhibition Assembled by Vesterheim, The Norwegian-American Museum* (Decorah, 1978). Alan Jabbour discusses the Bilyes and other Iowa clock makers inspired by them in "Keeping Track of Culture: Grassroots Conservation," in *Passing Time and Traditions: Contemporary Iowa Folk Artists*, ed. Steven Ohrn (Des Moines and Ames, 1984), 149–59.

11. For a discussion of the sale and marketing of mass-produced timepieces, see Michael O'Malley, *Keeping Watch: A History of American Time* (Washington, DC, 1990), 145–99, esp. p. 184.

clock they created around 1930. By clothing a mass-produced commodity in an elaborate handmade case, they confounded distinctions between machine-made and hand-created much as the European avant-garde — such as Marcel Duchamp — did in the 1910s and 1920s. Although they chose to keep their clocks in rural Spillville, I argue that thanks to their imaginative engagement with modernity, the Bily brothers did not see themselves as entirely submerged in Dvořák's bucolic retreat. Rather, they saw themselves as cosmopolitan regionalists, artists engaged with Iowa and the rest of the world.

DURING THEIR FIRST TEN YEARS of carving, the Bilys purchased clock case designs created for hobbyists from mail-order purveyors.¹² Yet they did not approach their work as craftsmen: they did not make their objects for use. Even before they fully mastered their craft or developed an artistic vision, they made their clocks for display.¹³ The designs they used featured more scroll (jig) saw work than carving, but the brothers quickly began to vary and enlarge them by adding their own hand-carved figures or bases.¹⁴ Although enormous relative to

12. As Hutchinson notes (xvi), these designs can still be purchased.

13. Many recent works explore the possibility of non-practical uses of craft, or, to put it another way, they question how integral the notion of use is to craft, a line of thought that ultimately blurs the distinction between art and craft in the way that the Bilys themselves did. For books focused on carving and woodwork, see Michael Owen Jones, *The Hand Made Object and its Maker* (Berkeley, CA, 1975), esp. chap. 2; Simon J. Bronner, *Chain Carvers: Old Men Crafting Meaning* (Lexington, KY, 1984), 69; and Julia S. Ardery, *The Temptation: Edgar Tolson and the Genesis of Twentieth-Century Folk Art* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1998), 38. Most recently, Richard Sennett, in *The Craftsman* (New Haven, 2008), 8, a book focused on craft, echoes the “art for art’s sake” mantra by defining craft as work done “well for its own sake.” Conversely, Glenn Adamson, in *Thinking Through Craft* (Oxford, 2007), argues that “craft,” with its emphasis on use, needs to be recognized as the essence of art.

14. In this respect, the Bilys’ artistic trajectory reverses that of Sarah Jane Kimball, described in Michael Lewis, “Stitching Together Meaning: Sarah Jane Kimball’s Fancywork, Class, and Consumption in Late Nineteenth-Century Iowa,” *Annals of Iowa* 59 (2000), 141–64. Lewis argues that Kimball, who eagerly decorated her home with handmade “fancywork,” gradually placed her expressive energies into mail-order shopping, thereby making a “transition from an artifact creator to a catalog consumer” (164). The Bilys did the reverse as they became conscious of themselves as artists.

the spaces that housed them, the clocks were miniatures of the monumental public clocks of European church towers and town halls. Crucially, the Bilys' additions reveal the importance they placed on time as a theme and how pervasively they intermingled American and European imagery. The local and the modern loom as gothic iconography. For example, the standard-issue design of their second piece, the 1913 *Hall Clock* evokes a gothic cathedral. The brothers' additions modernize and localize the work by adding three carved figures in modern dress with musical instruments — representatives of the Spillville town band — who emerge from the arched doorway on the hour. The 1915 *Capitol Style Clock*, with a case in the shape of a cathedral crowned by a single domed central tower, similarly Americanizes a European design by adding a wooden statue of George Washington in the entryway and twin American eagles atop shields decorated with stars and stripes. Shuttered windows on both sides of the clock face open to reveal a scene from the Battle of Bunker Hill and a depiction of Christopher Columbus's arrival in North America. Likewise, when the Bilys carved the *Apostles' Clock* in 1915–1916, they started with the pattern's gothic cathedral-esque case but altered it by placing the fretwork piece on a large pedestal of their own design. With hand-carved images of Prague's town square, including its medieval astronomical clock (which features moving apostles to mark the hour), and Spillville's Saint Wenceslaus Church, the pedestal renders the ancestral home coexistent with Spillville, in the same plane of space and time. The Bilys' vast perspective also emerges in contrast to a photograph they owned of a *Tall Corn Clock*. The front of this tall case clock is decorated entirely with corn cobs, kernels, a cornucopia, and a clock face labeled "Iowa"; nothing places Iowa or farming in any larger context.¹⁵

Within a decade of undertaking clock case carving, the brothers' work was fully shaped by a secular, modern vision of time. Leaving behind cathedral-based mail-order patterns for hobbyists, in 1923 they began work on the clock that established them

15. The photograph, which only shows the front of the clock, is undated, and the only other information in the caption indicates that the clock was located in Lake Mills, Iowa. The name in the lower right corner, P. E. Bolstad, could indicate the creator, the photographer, or the owner.

as artists: the *American Pioneer History Clock*, the first clock made entirely from their own design. The museum pamphlet notes that the clock “stands over eight feet tall and weighs more than 500 pounds. The design is a series of 57 panels representing events in American history.” With this accomplishment, the brothers’ confidence in their work evidently reached a turning point. Around that time, they began to display their clocks to the public. In 1926, when the collection became too large for the confines of a farmhouse parlor, they built an exhibition hall, charged a dime admission to each entrant, and sold postcards, plates, and other memorabilia. The *WPA Guide to 1930s Iowa* included the “clock farm” in its discussion of attractions.¹⁶

WITH THEIR MODEL T, the brothers could have traveled to exhibits in Cedar Rapids or witnessed the flourishing of modern architecture in nearby Mason City (made famous as the model for Meredith Willson’s nostalgic “River City”), which commissioned Frank Lloyd Wright to design a bank and hotel for the town and also featured a neighborhood full of homes designed by the forward-thinking architects of Wright’s firm (ca. 1910). But a picture of Frank Bily at the wheel of the model T shows him going nowhere: he has driven into a field and parked there while Joseph poses on the running board (fig. 1). There is logic, then, in the clock museum story that constructs the brothers as rural Iowans above all and artists after that. Their work, however, indicates that they saw themselves as participants in a vast network of artists and thinkers traversing time and space in a way that humanists and artists have always used to define the cumulative progress of their work but also in a way new to the twentieth century. In other words, the Bilyes participated in a cultural universe that encompassed not only their home but also an imagined republic of letters first posited by humanist ideals. The twentieth century’s mass media and mass markets intensified the opportunities for the exchange of ideas and inspiration and brought the brothers the supplies they needed and the audience they wanted.

16. *The WPA Guide to 1930s Iowa* (1938; reprint, Ames, 1986), 347.



Figure 1. The Bilyes with their car. Courtesy of the Bily Clock Museum.

The Bilyes saw themselves as artists rooted in both Spillville and in a world that extended far beyond it. That vision emerges clearly in the contrast between Grant Wood's self-fashioning as a devoted Iowan and the Bilyes' contemporaneous labors on the clock collection they titled the "Art of Wood-Carving" (fig. 2). The Bilyes did enjoy some celebrity in their lifetime. They did not achieve fame on the level of Grant Wood, whose prize for *American Gothic* and the subsequent controversy about its meaning placed him in nearly every national news magazine.¹⁷ Nor did their reputation endure, as Wood's did. But the brothers had a steady stream of visitors, sometimes 1,000 in one day. Front-page cartoons from the *Decorah Republican* of the era commented on local tourism. One, captioned "Spring Invasion," showed an old farm couple on their front porch marveling at automobile-choked country roads (April 19, 1928); three months later, "Touring Season is On" depicted farm boys boasting about the varied license plates they have seen whiz by.¹⁸ Celebrities such as Cole Porter

17. Wood, with the help of his sister, Nan, carefully collected and commented on all the publicity he received. The scrapbooks can be consulted at the Figge Museum of Art in Davenport, Iowa. I thank curator Michelle Robinson for allowing me to consult those materials.

18. *Decorah Republican*, 4/19/1928, 7/19/1928.

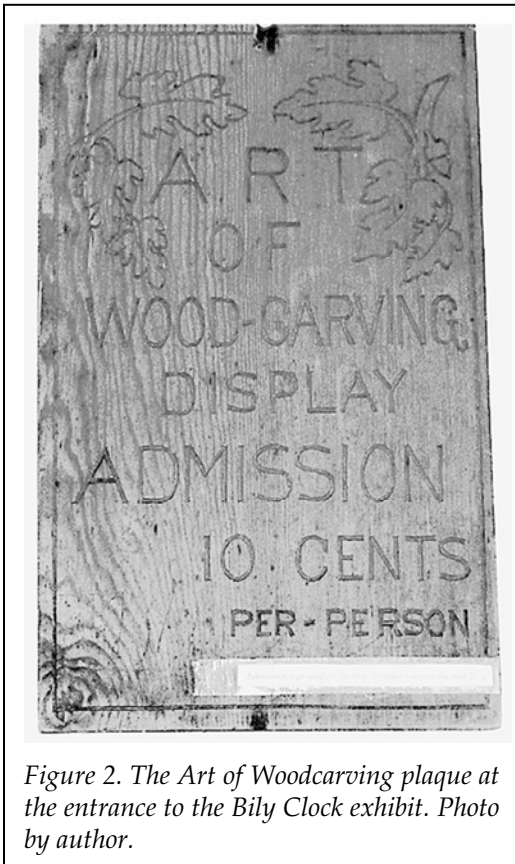


Figure 2. *The Art of Woodcarving* plaque at the entrance to the Bily Clock exhibit. Photo by author.

and Edward G. Robinson owned Wood paintings; the Bilys, on the other hand, garnered admiration by keeping their clocks at home. They turned down the opportunity to display their clocks at the 1933 Chicago World's Fair (which took as its theme the "Century of Progress"), and tour guides tell visitors that in 1928 the brothers refused Henry Ford's offer to buy their collection.¹⁹ Local newspapers reported on the Bilys' latest works and newest plans. The *Mason City Globe-Gazette* announced the begin-

ning or completion of various clocks, and *The Ford Times*, a national magazine promoting automobile-based tourism, devoted a feature article to the collection in 1955, noting that "each year 40,000 people stop off in Spillville, Iowa, to see what time it is."²⁰

19. I have not been able to document this offer, although Ford's agents did scout rural America in the 1920s for artifacts to display at Greenfield Village, Ford's living history museum, which opened in 1929. See Geoffrey C. Upward, ed., *A Home for Our Heritage: The Building and Growth of Greenfield Village and Henry Ford Museum, 1929-1979* (Dearborn, MI, 1979). A collection of Spillville schoolchildren's essays about the Bily brothers contains one by Irene Benda, dated February 14, 1924, which states that the brothers refused a \$1,000 offer from an unnamed customer. "A Story in the History of My Community," vertical file, State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

20. Hutchinson, *Bily Brothers*; A. M. Wettach, "The Bily Brothers' Clocks," *Ford Times*, April 1955, 51.

The publicity brought them an audience and an income, and their association with Dvořák gave them high-art prestige and perhaps calmed any desires to seek a more artistic milieu. The 1948 *Violin Clock*, carved by Joseph alone, suggests such a resolution. The composer's portrait dominates the center of the lower bout, and a clock face in the upper bout is adorned with the names of cities in which his works were played. Significantly, the caption on the base of the clock places Spillville at the center, if not the origins, of Dvořák's career. It gives the dates of his birth and death, but it does *not* note where those events took place. Only Spillville and Dvořák's 1893 sojourn there earn the glory of engraving (fig. 3).

Although the *Violin Clock* credits Spillville, rather than Europe, for Dvořák's artistic achievements, the Bilys were not blind to the limitations of their environs. Some of the most celebrated novels of their day portrayed the cultural deprivation of midwestern small towns. In *Main Street* (1920), Nobel Prize winner Sinclair Lewis portrayed a young woman's futile struggle to bring art to benighted Gopher Prairie, Minnesota. In Pulitzer Prize winner Willa Cather's *My Antonia* (1918), a cultured Czech immigrant succumbs to suicidal melancholia brought on by the hardship and isolation of Black Hawk, Nebraska. The Bilys express similar frustration in a note written on the cover of the 1945 Winnieshiek County Agricultural Association annual fair program. In a cloud that adorns the prairie landscape depicted at the top of the cover, one of the brothers wrote "no premium

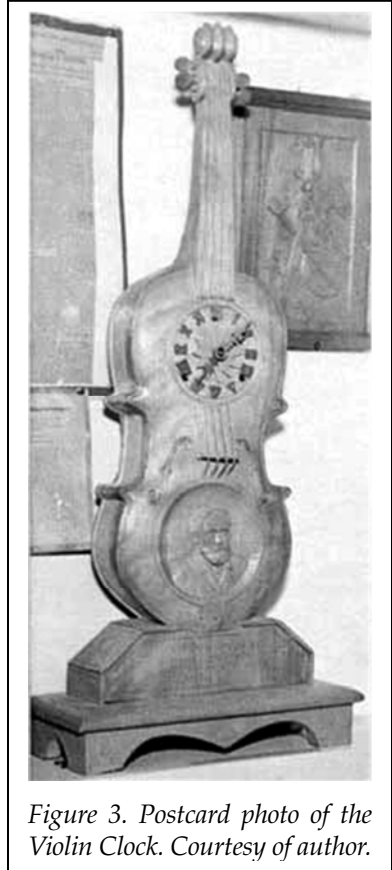


Figure 3. Postcard photo of the *Violin Clock*. Courtesy of author.

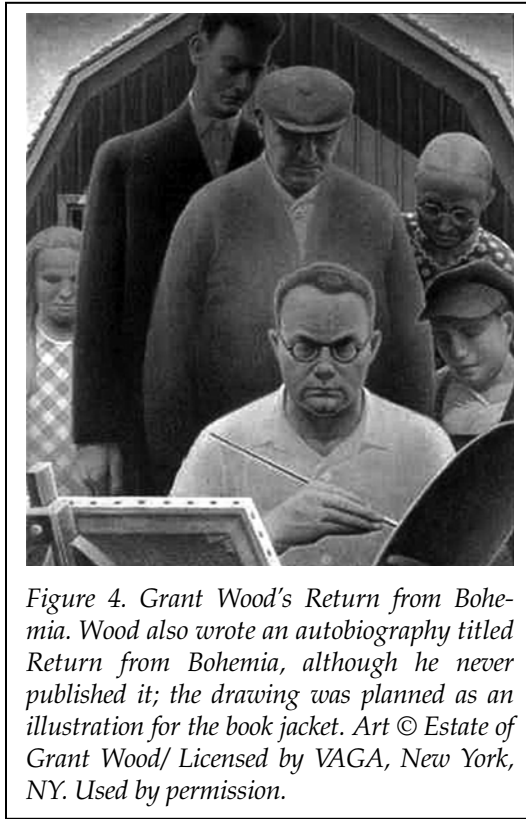


Figure 4. Grant Wood's *Return from Bohemia*. Wood also wrote an autobiography titled *Return from Bohemia*, although he never published it; the drawing was planned as an illustration for the book jacket. Art © Estate of Grant Wood/ Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY. Used by permission.

on art” and referred to page 114, where the text explains that since the exhibit’s purpose is educational, ribbons will be given to the best booths put together by teachers in the various county townships, but that individual students will not be singled out for premiums. On that page, Frank or Joseph underlined “no premiums are given for individual articles exhibited” and wrote at the top *and* bottom of the page “In regard to art” — implying that pigs and preserves were better rewarded.²¹

21. This program can be found in one of several uncatalogued boxes of the Bily’s magazines and news clippings. These items are stored in bookcases on the second floor of the Bily Clock Museum in Spillville, along with shelves of mail-ordered plaster busts, evidently used as models for some of the wooden busts in the *Statuary Clock*. I thank Carol Riehle at the Bily Clock Museum for allowing me to examine these materials.

In their art, however, the Bilys' view of Iowa was as expansive as the fair guide's depiction of the prairie horizon. A contrast between Grant Wood's 1935 self-portrait, *Return from Bohemia* (fig. 4) and the Bilys' *Statuary Clock* (1928–1930), an enormous cabinet crowded with labeled wood busts, full figure statues, and plaques (fig. 5), highlights the Bilys' capacious vision of Iowa's place in world culture. Both Wood and the Bilys experienced and internalized some frustration with provincial philistinism, but only Wood made the struggle part of his artistic identity. Iowa was the safe place to which he returned after his prodigal flings in Europe. His sister, Nan Wood, explained his state of mind by approvingly citing a 1937 profile of the artist that appeared in *Scribner's* magazine. The author, Thomas Craven, explained that Wood was "a

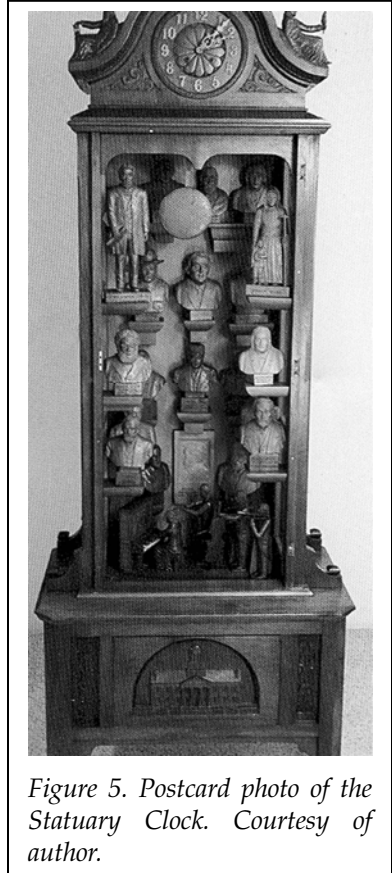


Figure 5. Postcard photo of the *Statuary Clock*. Courtesy of author.

victim of that old and snobbish superstition that a man cannot become an artist without submerging his personality in European ideas and conforming to the theories and practices prescribed by a colony of Bohemian esthetes."²² By returning from Bohemia,²³ Wood signaled his renunciation not of art but of the

22. Cited by Nan Wood Graham with John Zug and Julie Jensen McDonald in *My Brother, Grant Wood* (Iowa City, 1993), 44. Steven Biel, *American Gothic: A Life of America's Most Famous Painting* (New York, 2005), provides an accessible and detailed account of the way Wood transformed provincialism into regionalism.

23. The term *Bohemia* had been in use since at least the 1840s, when Henri Murger began using it in his stories and sketches about the artistic subcultures of Paris. For an intriguing discussion of American "Bohemias" in this era, see Christine Stansell's *American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a*

unconventional, rootless urban lifestyle of European artists and their American counterparts. Thus, upon his "return" to his roots, Wood depicts himself painting, almost glaring with determination, with his back to a barn. In contrast to this rustic composition, the Bilys use an ornate cabinet for the *Statuary Clock* with an image of Iowa City's Old Capitol at the base.

Note the arrangement of people in both works. In Wood's painting, a generation-spanning group of Iowans circle behind the artist as they gaze at his canvas. In 1931 Wood told the *Cedar Rapids Gazette* that he was planning a self-portrait in which "the background will be the usual loafing bystanders who find time to watch . . . with contempt, scorn, and an I-know- I-could-do-it-better look."²⁴ It is worth observing, however, that some of them, particularly the older man standing directly behind the artist, resemble Wood himself. Unlike Wood, the Bilys do not portray themselves or any unappreciative onlookers in their *Statuary Clock*; instead, they range through history and geography for their cast: Shakespeare, Kant, two Dvořáks (Antonin, the composer, and Thomas, an early Spillville settler), Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Henrik Ibsen, Richard Wagner, Tomas Masaryk ("First President of Czechoslovakia"), an unnamed "American pioneer woman," Joseph Spielman (Spillville founder), and J. J. Haug (the town's first postmaster). Some members of the Bilys' cast are European geniuses, others are American heroes, and yet others are the workaday European immigrants who settled the New World, in flight, like the Bilys' parents, from their oppressed and oppressive homelands, such as the real Bohemia. Crucially, the brothers establish no clear hierarchy: the busts sit on shelves ranged throughout the cabinet, and they can be arranged and rearranged in any order. With his title and subject matter, Wood's painting depicts his forsworn allegiance to Europe and modern art, whereas the self-taught Bilys ostensibly felt no need to limit themselves to their region by drawing such historic and geographic boundaries. Neither Wood nor the Bilys

New Century (New York, 2000). In spite of the title, Stansell also describes mid-western Bohemians, such as Floyd Dell and Susan Glaspell, who formed an enclave in Davenport in the 1910s (46–49). See also Biel, *American Gothic*, 61–68.

24. Cited by Wanda M. Corn in *Grant Wood: The Regionalist Vision* (New Haven, CT, 1983), 112.

paid much sustained attention to the crises of the day, such as the world wars and economic depression, but the Bily's sense of scale spanned a larger range of time and place than Wood's.

The Bily's displayed this unbounded perspective from the start of their carving career. Just as they brought twentieth-century Spillville into the mail-ordered, European-inspired clock case patterns they initially used, the Bily's modified published designs to incorporate their vision of an artistic community. The 1913–1914 *Chimes of Normandy Clock*, for example, was placed on a base featuring a relief of "Westminster Abbey." Side panels devoted to the muses of art and music confirm that the Bily's understood that the abbey, as a center of learning and a burial place for British rulers and artists, memorialized the accumulating achievements of a culture. Their *Apostles Parade Clock* (carved about five years after the *Apostles Clock*) also features these muses flanking Father Time. Later, several of their original designs were completely devoted to this theme. The *Statuary Clock*, discussed above, provides one example; the *Parade of Nations Clock*, another original design, carved about two years later, intensified their cosmopolitanism. With a traditional cuckoo clock at the peak, the center of the clock is dominated by an orbiting globe with 35 characters in varying national costumes circling the equator (fig. 6). Above this globe, on either side, are relief carvings of early modern cosmologists Tycho Brahe and Galileo. At the base of the cabinet, a biblical caption proclaims, "A nation shall not lift up a sword against nation[.]

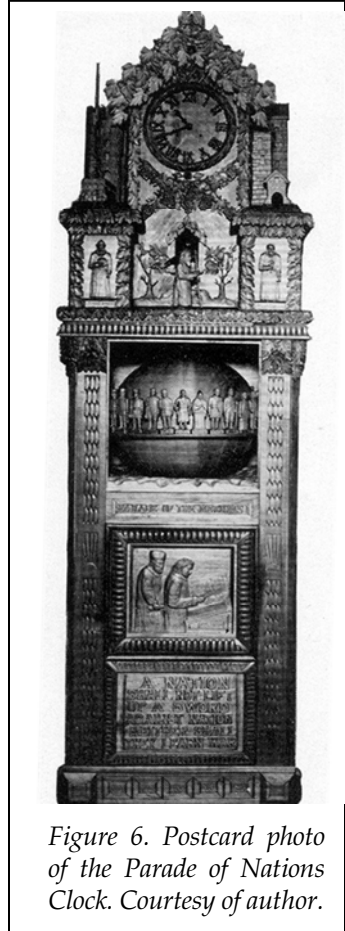


Figure 6. Postcard photo of the *Parade of Nations Clock*. Courtesy of author.



Figure 7. Caption on right side panel of the Parade of Nations Clock.
Photo by author.

neither shall they learn war." The side panels depict a "history of education." In what may be the closest to a self-portrait the Bilys ever came, this history includes the Bilys' claim to cosmopolitan regionalism: a sign presenting "this world of ours" flanked by two men, one theatrically pointing to the sign and the other holding a large globe (fig. 7).

Their commitment to both modern ideals and Old World culture gives evidence of the sort of cosmopolitanism that cultural leaders, including Wood himself, deliberately excluded in their portrayals of the heartland. In contrast to the Bilys' ambition to portray myriad inhabitants and historical stages of "this world of ours," Grant Wood advocated not only a return to rural Iowa but also a "revolt against Literary Humanism" because of its "disproportionate emphasis on cultures of the remote past."²⁵ The Bilys, on the other hand, were proud book collectors who signed the frontispieces in their volumes in elaborate cursive

25. Cited by E. Bradford Burns in *Kinship with the Land: Regionalist Thought in Iowa, 1894-1942* (Iowa City, 1996), 17.

(fig. 8); their library ranged through *Iowa's State Parks and Preserves* (1937), Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), and *The Clock Book* by Wallace Nutting (1924), which featured a photograph of Joseph Bily's *Dvořák Clock* as a frontispiece. They subscribed to *American Art Student and Commercial Artist*, *American Carpenter and Builder*, and *Hobbies*. They read the *Des Moines Register* and local papers. They were curious about futurism, underlining the points that interested them in Christopher Nevinson and Filippo Marinetti's 1914 "Vital English Art: A Futurist Manifesto." Like the authors, the Bilys evidently shared a disdain for

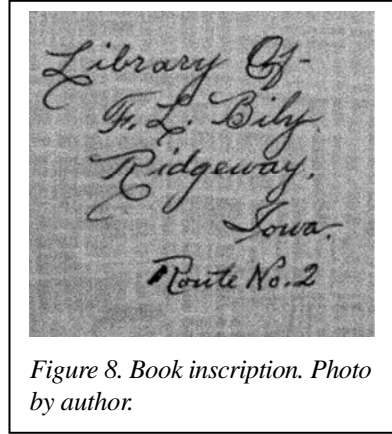


Figure 8. Book inscription. Photo by author.

6. The English notion that Art is a useless pastime, only fit for women and schoolgirls, that artists are poor deluded fools to be pitied and protected, and Art a ridiculous complaint, a mere topic for table-talk.

7. The universal right of the ignorant to discuss and decide upon all questions of art.

8. The old grotesque ideal of genius — drunken, filthy, ragged, outcast: drunkenness the synonym of Art.²⁶

As farmers and carpenters, the brothers already fit the futurist ideal implied in this invective against bohemian stereotypes, while their reading materials connected them to a world beyond the village. Likewise, their admiration of venerated geniuses such as Kant and Shakespeare allowed them to share the mental time and space of the western humanist traditions that Wood deemed too remote (in both space and time) for artists in Iowa.

The futurist manifesto, even as it implicitly contrasted the rooted, hardworking artist to the outcast drunken genius, goes on to praise the modern phenomenon of speed and the new

The futurist manifesto, even as it implicitly contrasted the rooted, hardworking artist to the outcast drunken genius, goes on to praise the modern phenomenon of speed and the new

26. This manifesto was printed in their copy (at the Bily Clock Musuem in Spillville) of W. Hugh Higginbottom, *Frightfulness in Modern Art* (New York, 1928), 129.

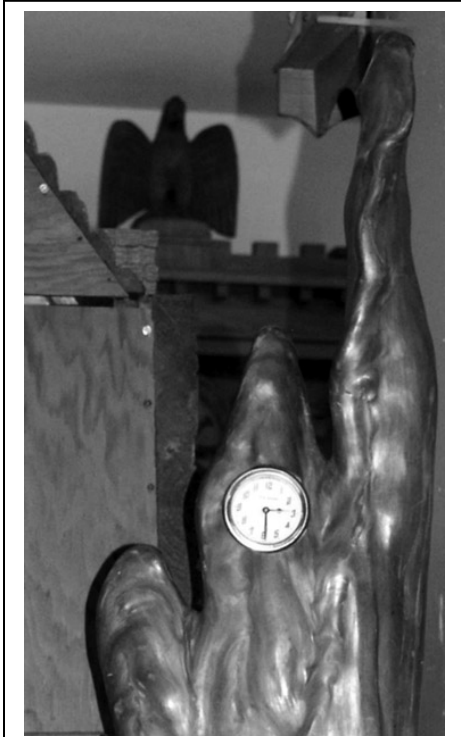


Figure 9. Untitled clock in the style of Dali. Photo by author.

technologies that heightened it. The brothers further documented their interest in these issues by affixing clippings about clocks, clockmakers, and the nature of time to the blank pages in the fronts of their books. In Nutting's *Clock Book*, they stored an anonymous article philosophizing about time's importance. ("Time is not only the measure of life. It is the very stuff that life is made of.") A fastidiously clipped sentence fragment, stored in a book called *Time and Timekeepers: Including the History, Construction, Care, and Accuracy of Clocks and Watches* by Willis I. Milham (1923), both illustrates and exem-

plifies this interest: "streamlined passenger train, which shorten distance and race the clock."²⁷ Their work, particularly their later clock designs, takes as a theme the experience epitomized by that "streamlined passenger train," a quintessentially modern phenomenon now called "space-time compression." The phrase describes the way new technologies shorten the time it takes to travel and to receive communication from distant points as well as the anxiety and fascination provoked by this ever increasing speed.²⁸

27. In the same book I also found pages from clock catalogs, two newspaper clippings about the 1730 invention of the cuckoo clock, articles about clock collectors, a photograph of Frank Bily, and a newspaper clipping about Strasbourg.

28. See Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880–1918* (Cambridge, MA, 1983), 268. Geographer David Harvey builds on Kern's work in his key discus-

Although time and distance can be experienced apart from clocks, the clock not only measures but also represents the modern experience of these abstractions. Iconic images of modernity, such as Charlie Chaplin laboring on a giant clock in *Modern Times* (1936), demonstrate the anxiety provoked by this mechanism. With a small untitled modernistic clock (fig. 9), the Bilyls themselves echo the melting clocks in Salvador Dali's 1931 painting *The Persistence of Memory*. Conversely, in the home, supposed haven from this heartless world, the clock could be nostalgically equated to the human heart as it was in Henry Clay Work's enormously popular song "My Grandfather's Clock," in which the machine stopped ticking on the day "the old man died."²⁹ The Bilyls conveyed all of these responses to time and its measure in their clocks.

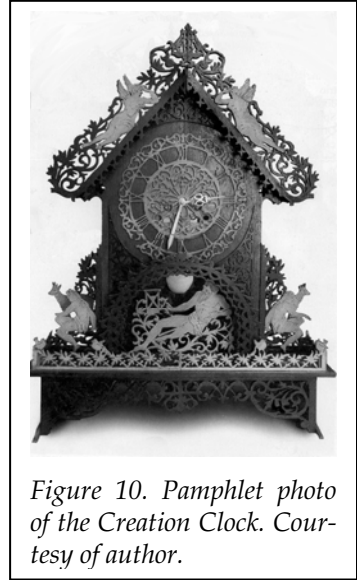


Figure 10. Pamphlet photo of the Creation Clock. Courtesy of author.

THREE ASPECTS of these clocks illustrate how they were designed to reflect a specific interest in the modern experience of time, speed, and travel: the repeated representation of the clock face as a globe; clocks with transportation, travel, discovery and conquest as a theme; and, finally, as a rule-proving exception, the only overtly nostalgic clock, the *Village Blacksmith* (1942–1943).

The faces on the Bilyls' mail-order clocks draw no attention to themselves, but many of their own designs replace unadorned circles with a detailed globe as the "face" or other prominent

sion of the role of space time compression in the formation of modern culture in his *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford, 1990), 260–83.

29. On the impact of this song, see John W. Finson, *The Voices that Are Gone: Themes in Nineteenth-Century American Popular Song* (Oxford, 1994), 124–33.



Figure 11. Pamphlet photo of the *Paradise Clock*. Courtesy of author.

design feature. Their first wholly original design, the *Pioneer History Clock*, shows an interesting transition from their purchased designs. The clock face sits in a tree with no visible leaves. Instead, the numbers orbit around a moon and star suspended in the branches. Four years later, in the 1928 *Lindbergh Clock* (shaped like an airplane and featuring a bust of the pilot), the clock face becomes a globe. The *Struggle for Time Clock* (1931–1932) also has a globe face, and a revolving globe dominates the *Parade of Nations Clock* (1932–1934). The *Statuary Clock* intensifies this technique and theme. The Bilys enlarged the pendulum swinging in this cabinet by making it into a globe nearly the same size as the clock face above it. The *Paradise Clock* from the mid-1930s culminates the Bilys' exploration of

this theme as it revisits the subject of their first clock, 1913's *Creation Clock*. The early clock portrays little of the biblical creation myth, although a flat cutout figure who could be Father Time holds an hourglass beneath the lacy clock face. In contrast, the *Paradise Clock* imagines creation as a product of time meeting space, showing a profuse Eden with three tiers of forest stocked with palms, fruit trees, evergreens, and animals from diverse habitats. A globe floating in space tops the clock face, and the base cabinet, captioned "God creating the sun and the

moon," shows the deity floating above the globe with the sun on the right hand and the moon on the left (figs. 10 and 11).

The *Struggle for Time Clock* (1929) is an oddity in the generally straightforwardly representational Bily collection (fig. 12). The museum pamphlet explains that this clock was inspired by the onslaught of automobiles arriving in Spillville to bring viewers to the collection, although it also evokes the horror of mortality. Interestingly, this clock portrays no form of locomotion except the inevitable hands of time. On the case, a pair of women and three men, separated by a free-floating nautical steering wheel, cower and

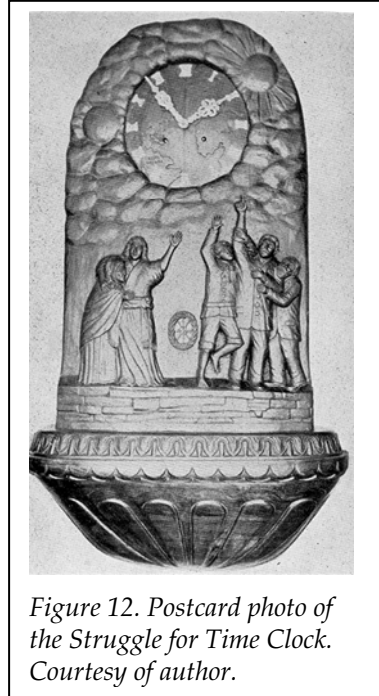


Figure 12. Postcard photo of the *Struggle for Time Clock*. Courtesy of author.

point to the sky, where a globe-faced clock and oppressive, boulder-like clouds diminish the moon and the sun. Adding to the sense of doom, the people stand on a brick floor or wall. Their costumes represent diverse periods of history: the women are dressed in nondescript ancient or medieval robes while two of the men wear more contemporary dress clothes. The third man, closest to the center of the clock, is barefoot yet dressed in a more old-fashioned suit with the pant legs rolled up. The male faces are distinct but unidentified. Except for the names of the continents on the clock face, there are no captions. Shaped like a tombstone, the clock seems to bemoan, rather than celebrate, the passage of time. Instead of depicting specific historical moments or artifacts, it offers an allegorical image of the cosmos as a prison guarded and doomed by a clock.

Ten years later, the *History of Travel Clock* (1939–1942) hints at a similar unease. It seems to glorify “The Lure of Speed,” although the equivocal wording of the caption also expresses anxiety about the technology of time-space compression. “Lure”

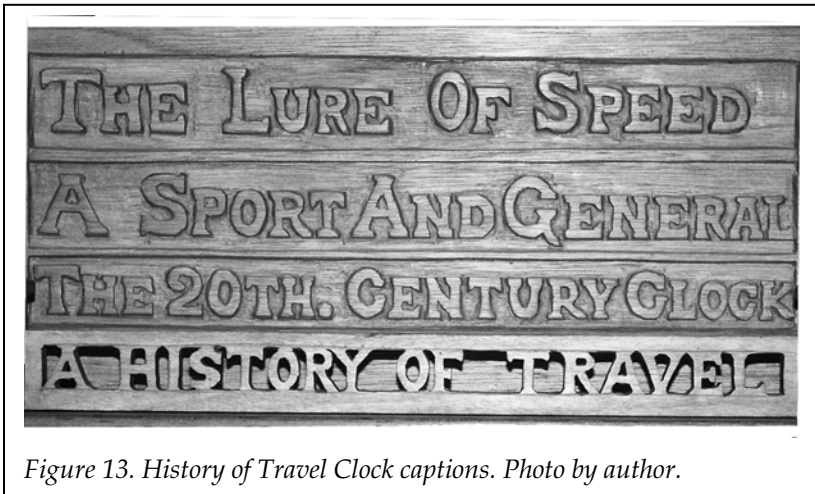


Figure 13. History of Travel Clock captions. Photo by author.

implies excitement and attraction, but also evokes temptation and entrapment. Another caption, for the *20th Century Clock*, underscores the sense of culmination (fig. 13). The history begins with depictions of maritime explorers, then places land-based transport, such as horses, bicycles, and cars, above the water-based vehicles, and finishes with air transport (a plane, a dirigible, a hot air balloon) floating around the clock face (here a sun). The clock emphasizes movement over arrival, but its details reveal a more disturbing theme. Carved during World War II, the airplane depicted on the clock is a military vehicle. The three ships portrayed at the bottom of the cabinet also mingle travel and conquest: they are captioned "Columbus," "early Americans" (natives in a canoe), and "Vikings." A small American eagle hovers over the caption while a huge one presides over the turreted cabinet; a marching band adds another note of triumphalism. This clock is about the possibility of going places, perhaps even about the possibility of conquering those places, but where those places are or how that "travel" affects the people who live in those places is not directly portrayed. That would be a *different* history of travel, something the largest caption, "A History of Travel," hints at with its interesting use of the indefinite article. *This* history stresses the increasing speed of conveyance; *another* history might explore the consequences of such travel.

The *History of Travel Clock* indirectly portrays imperial conquest; another work from the late 1930s, *On the Look-out[:] A Memorial to the American Pioneer*, incorporates in one clock the dual perspective of progress and havoc, victory and defeat (fig. 14). Topped by an American Indian family emerging from a forest (in which a small clock is embedded), the case memorializes several civilizations. In size, placement, and three-dimensionality, the Indians dominate the design. Beneath them (separated by another brick wall motif) is a relief of a pioneer family traveling through the woods in a covered wagon. The

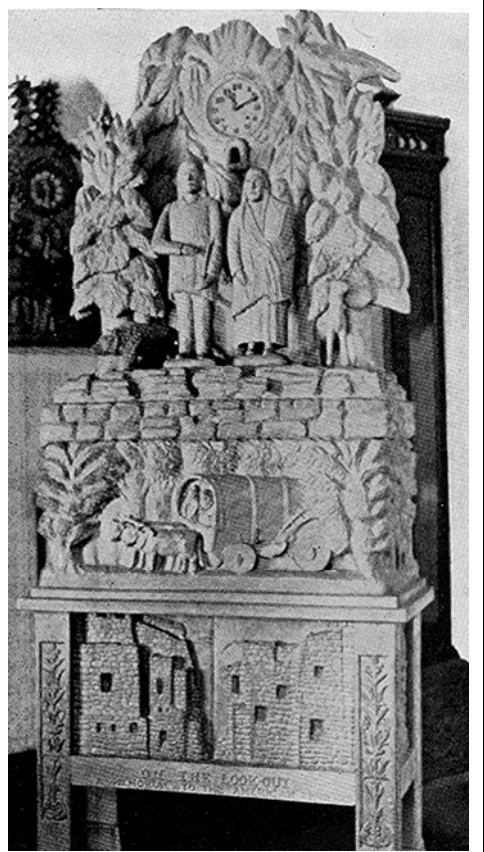


Figure 14. Postcard photo of *On the Look-out Clock*. Courtesy of author.

tree to their left holds a squirrel innocently chewing a nut; to their right, an eagle readies its wings to swoop. As if to note that this history repeats itself, the base cabinet shows an "Aztec Indian Village." The side panels feature representative woodwork from the Indians *and* the pioneers: a crude log cabin on the left panel and more elegant totem poles on the right. In many ways another version of their breakthrough, celebratory *American Pioneer History Clock* of the 1920s — in fact, the earlier clock is also captioned "Memorial to the American Pioneers" — *On the Look-out* mourns the conquered and displaced American Indian civilizations.



Figure 15. Postcard photo of the Village Blacksmith Clock. Courtesy of author.

The *Village Blacksmith Clock*, carved in 1942–1943, the last massive clock the brothers made (fig. 15), portrays the pioneer past as a sort of dollhouse. The museum pamphlet explains that “the famous first line of Longfellow’s 1841 poem was the inspiration” for the clock. But just as the Bilys modified mail-order designs, they altered the image conjured by Longfellow’s opening lines: “Under a spreading chestnut tree / The village smithy stands.” The spreading chestnut

tree is nowhere in sight: even the wood for the clock — butternut, birch, maple, and white oak — makes no reference to it. Furthermore, this village blacksmith seems to be an old man rather than the muscled young father with “crisp, and black, and long” hair that Longfellow describes. In other respects, though, the Bilys paid virtuosic attention to visual detail: the customer’s straw hat is removable, the rivets on the fireplace hood show clearly, and deep in the shop a collection of detachable smithing tools hangs on the back wall.

A late addition to the clock, carved to look like a weathered broadside, hangs on the right side of the blacksmith’s shop. (Early postcards do not show this feature.) Here, a (mis)quotation from Alexander Pope’s “Ode on Solitude” (1735) makes an interesting thematic commentary on the Bilys’ preoccupation

with time, travel, and progress, as it seems to praise the opposite: "Happy the man whose wish and care content to breathe his native air a few paternal acres bound in his own ground" (fig. 16). The verb — "bound" — places this happy man, like the blacksmith shop and its patrons, in the past. He is bound, perhaps buried, in his own ground. The correct quotation makes the temporality more equivocal since "by paternal acres bound" most likely modifies "wish and care" rather than "the man": "Happy the man whose wish and care / A few paternal acres bound, / Content to breathe his native air, / In his own ground."³⁰ Pope praises the truly regionalist man who can gladly limit his horizon to his homestead; the Bilys place that possibility in the past. Rather than simply illustrating Longfellow's and Pope's poems, then, this clock documents the bygone era of old men, horse-drawn farming, and lives confined to a village. Appropriately, the clock makes no reference to traversing the globe and has an unornamented face, just simple roman numerals arranged in a circle.

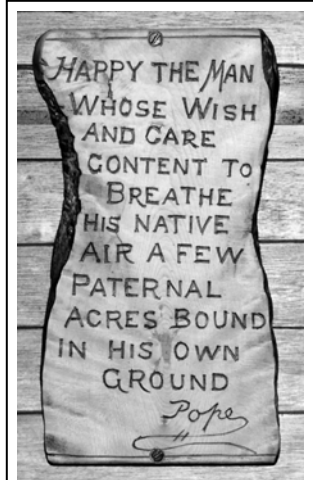


Figure 16. Alexander Pope "quotation" on the Village Blacksmith Clock. Photo by author.

IRONICALLY, not just the *Village Blacksmith Clock*, but now all of the clocks, bound to the Dvořák house and Spillville, have come to represent the slow pace and place of an agricultural past. But while they tended their paternal acres, and while Iowa's

30. Pope claimed to have written this poem when he was 12 years old (1700), and he published it in several versions over the course of his lifetime. No published version matches the Bilys' (mis)quotation, although one leaves out the "paternal acres" altogether, replacing it with "How happy he, who free from care / The rage of courts, and noise of towns; / Contented breathes his native air, / In his own grounds." For an account of the versions of this poem, see Dustin Griffin, "Revisions in Pope's 'Ode on Solitude,'" *Modern Language Quarterly* 36 (1975), 369–75.

cultural image was dominated by Grant Wood's lovely rural landscapes and hard-bitten rustic portraits, the Bilys absorbed as much of the world and time as they could. To judge from their extensive portrayals of the shifting intersections of time and space, they imagined that modernity itself unbound them from their paternal acres, allowing them not only the possibility of carving out a cosmopolitan bohemia at home but also of representing that home to the rest of the world. Historians and critics may (or may not) ultimately deem other artists more talented than the Bilys, but their clocks, bound to Spillville, show how modernity affected Iowans and how Iowans, and the thousands of others who visited the museum, could simultaneously respond to modernity and evaluate their past.

The Lost World of Marshal J: History, Memory, and Iowa's Forgotten Broadcast Legend

PHILLIP J. HUTCHISON

AT 4:30 P.M. ON OCTOBER 3, 1954, a lanky Iowa cowboy named Jay Alexander initiated a ritual that would come to shape the daily habits of untold numbers of midwestern families for nearly seven years. Each weekday afternoon, throughout sizable areas in four midwestern states, children rushed home from school, donned western gear, and gathered in front of black-and-white television sets. Meanwhile, parents adjusted rooftop antennas with set-top rotors and ensured that after-school snacks were in abundance. Then, as strains of "Tumbling Tumbleweeds" spilled out of the sets, young viewers excitedly watched Alexander, a fully adorned 6' 6" cowboy, gallop furiously toward the television camera on his striking golden Palomino. Just as the pair reached the camera, Alexander pulled hard on the horse's reins and skidded to a dusty stop. He then hopped off his mount with dramatic flair, looked directly into the camera and invited the audience to join him in his tack room for an hour's worth of cartoon fun and cowboy banter.

To television viewers across the region, the Cedar Rapids-based Alexander was no ordinary cowboy: he was Marshal J, one of the era's most prominent personalities — not only in children's television but all local television in eastern Iowa and neighboring states. Several factors underscored his popularity: From 1954 until early 1961, during the heyday of the nationwide

television cowboy phenomenon, Alexander's cowboy credentials were beyond reproach. He was a bona fide professional cowboy who competed on the rodeo circuit and socialized with western luminaries such as Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, Hopalong Cassidy, and Gabby Hayes.

As a paragon of a television genre that shaped the medium's early years, for more than a decade Alexander entered hundreds of thousands of homes each day via the broadcast airwaves of Iowa and, later, the San Francisco Bay area. In both areas, fans and coworkers recall that Alexander, in his larger-than-life Marshal J persona, not only could ride, rope, and shoot with the best of the television cowboys, but he was also creative and funny and projected a quiet, folksy charm that mesmerized younger and older children alike. Even 50 years later, some of his former fans fondly recall hurrying home from school, changing into western gear, and fighting with older siblings over control of the television when Marshal J aired. They attest to hanging on his every word during the program, because Marshal J was their idol.¹

Yet despite his one-time intense popularity, and despite representing the subject matter of several Iowa urban legends, in the years following his departure from television nearly all traces of Jay Alexander and Marshal J seem to have disappeared. Alexander is barely mentioned in contemporary histories, unlike many notable Iowa broadcasters, and even his erstwhile employers have been hard pressed to find any artifacts associated with their one-time star.² As is the case with so much of the dis-

1. The accounts were culled from interviews or correspondence with about 50 former fans in Iowa and California. Many of the remarkably consistent accounts use the words *idol* or *hero* to describe Alexander. Many grade schools in the region dismissed students at 3:45 p.m., so children had to rush home from school to catch the program after WMT moved it to the 4 p.m. timeslot in 1957.

2. Cary J. Hahn, e-mail message to author, 5/27/2003; Helen Whitson, e-mail message to author, 9/30/2003. A longtime reporter at KGAN-TV, Hahn has served as the station's de facto historian for many projects. Whitson, a now retired broadcast archivist from San Francisco State University, maintained KPIX-TV's archives for many years. Neither could find anything but the sketchiest material regarding Marshal J. Assorted print and broadcast popular histories of Iowa broadcasting include no more than one or two sentences about Marshal J. The most substantial of these popular histories is Jeff Stein, *Making Waves: The People and Places of Iowa Broadcasting* (Cedar Rapids, 2004).

posable local TV aesthetic Alexander personified, for assorted reasons much of his history was not documented much less archived. Consequently, existing histories often fail to adequately account for the institutional and social presence of some revealing historical figures and local programming associated with television's early years.³

To address such issues as they relate to Iowa history, this article recovers the lost history associated with Jay Alexander. Its first objective is to fill many of the gaps in the historical record associated with Alexander's background and his institutional and social impact in Iowa. The second objective is to address how and why such a highly visible popular culture icon appeared and disappeared from Iowa's social consciousness as Alexander did. Reflecting broader lines of historical research that view early television as a "historical artifact that sheds light on American history and culture,"⁴ Alexander's story informs key social, technological, and economic dynamics as they converged in Iowa during the 1950s. Given the scope of the issues involved, students of Iowa history will benefit from understanding how Alexander realized a vision for his genre in Iowa and beyond, but ultimately proved to be a product of a particular time and set of economic circumstances. His story illustrates how, in many ways, his one-time fame became a casualty of the same prefabricated TV aesthetic he exploited.

On a social level, Alexander's interrelated institutional contributions and his enigmatic presence in the region offer valuable insights into the relationship between local media celebrities and early television audiences. That relationship, as Alexander's story demonstrates, paradoxically was both transient and enduring in ways that, thus far, have not been well documented. Yet as communication scholar James Carey and American Studies scholar George Lipsitz argue, such relationships represent a

3. Tim Hollis, *Hi There, Boys and Girls! America's Local Children's TV Programs* (Jackson, MS, 2001). Hollis documents this pervasive problem throughout his book. Despite extensive searching, he found very little material about Marshal J.

4. Lynn Spigel, "Our Television Heritage: Television, the Archive, and the Reasons for Preservation," in *A Companion to Television*, ed. Janet Wasko (London, 2005), 70.

revealing facet of collective memory.⁵ About 50 testimonies (oral histories and correspondence) address these factors, highlighting the unexpected ways Jay Alexander's history has been preserved and the ambivalent ways many Iowans remember him. Together, these insights not only illuminate significant issues related to the early years of television in Iowa, but they also shed light on the ways Iowans remember their past and themselves.

MUCH OF ALEXANDER'S LIFE and career, particularly his pre-broadcasting years, is an enigma to those who knew him — including his children. Because of his noted storytelling skills, Alexander routinely embellished his biography to fortify his public persona and to obscure the negative repercussions of his decades-long affliction with alcoholism. As a result, and also because so many primary sources have disappeared, today no one seems to know exactly how or why Alexander went into broadcasting, nor has anyone explained exactly what bought him to Iowa. Alexander did provide biographical details to several journalists over the years, but different accounts emerged from each story.⁶

School and military records, however, portray Alexander J. Kotkis Jr., the only child of a noted St. Louis physician and medical school professor, as an unenthusiastic student who loved sports and apparently did not live up to his father's expectations. After dropping out of St. Louis University in 1941, he sold shoes for a brief time before joining the army after World War II broke out.⁷ His military service led to yet another enigma in Alexander's background, a mystery relating to his experiences as a member

5. James W. Carey, "A Cultural Approach to Communication," *Communication 2* (1975), 1–22; George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (Minneapolis, 1990).

6. Ralph Graczak, "Jay Alexander of St. Louis," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, ca. 1957. The undated column appeared in an Alexander family scrapbook in the possession of his daughter, Kate Yoemans. It correctly lists Alexander's hometown as St. Louis and acknowledges that his father (who died in 1958) "is" a physician. Elsewhere, Alexander claimed that he grew up on the ranges of Del Rio, Texas, and offered fanciful stories of his childhood there.

7. School records and Kotkis's application, dated, 6/5/1941, for a Social Security account (U.S. Treasury Department Form SS-5).

of the 66th Division on December 24, 1944. In part because of a decades-long government cover-up of these events, even the master storyteller never discussed his experiences publicly.

On that Christmas Eve, Private Kotkis and 2,234 other members of the 66th Division found themselves crammed into a Belgian troopship, the S.S. *Leopoldville*, as part of a frantic effort to augment struggling Allied forces during the Battle of the Bulge. However, the *Leopoldville* never completed its trip across the English Channel that night; it fell prey to a Nazi U-boat's torpedo five miles off the French coast. Although the troopship would not sink into the ink-black channel waters for nearly two hours, numerous accounts have documented the tragically botched rescue operation, a debacle that resulted in the largely avoidable deaths of 765 soldiers from the 66th Division.⁸ How Kotkis escaped the epic carnage has been lost to history; he may have survived a perilous two-story leap to a bobbing and weaving British destroyer — a risky action that claimed numerous lives — or he could have been one of several hundred soldiers plucked from the icy channel waters by late-arriving rescue boats. In either case, the U.S., British, and Belgian governments classified details of the debacle for decades and ordered survivors not to discuss their experiences.⁹ Survivors from the decimated division, including Kotkis, were re-equipped and immediately redeployed into 100 days of close-range combat in the French province of Brittany. Alexander apparently followed orders and never publicly discussed the S.S. *Leopoldville* disaster, so the long-term impact of the event on his life and career is impossible to gauge in retrospect.¹⁰

8. Allan Andrade, *S.S. Leopoldville Disaster, December 24, 1944* (New York, 1997); The History Channel, "Cover-Up: The Sinking of the S. S. *Leopoldville*," in *History Undercover*, DVD (1998).

9. Accounts of the carnage were not made public until 1963, long after Kotkis had legally changed his name to Jay Alexander. The issue was not completely declassified until more than a decade after Alexander's death.

10. Kate Yoemans, e-mail message to author, 3/13/2004. Yoemans is Alexander's daughter. The consequences of war for many World War II veterans are documented in many sources. See, for example, Charles Whiting, *Hero: The Life and Death of Audie Murphy* (Chelsea, MI, 1990). The story of Audie Murphy, America's most decorated World War II veteran, addresses the scope of the problem. In ways that were not addressed at the time, Murphy, and untold others, became dependent on various substances as a result of war trauma.

Immediately after the war, Alexander, like millions of fellow veterans, sought his own form of normalcy. During that period, to the extent that his activities can be reconstructed from government records and sketchy family accounts, he briefly returned to college and later married. He also continued to pursue his deep-seated love of sports and horses, a love that resulted in what he described as a one-game stint with the Chicago Cardinals of the National Football League and more extended forays into the rodeo circuit.¹¹ When injuries ended those aspirations in about 1950, Alexander turned to sportscasting at small radio stations in Missouri as a way to stay close to sports and provide for his new family.

THE EARLY 1950s proved to be an exciting and challenging time for broadcasters. Taking advantage of the situation, Kotkis adopted a new air name — Jay Alexander — and positioned himself in the middle of the action. At that time, many radio stations were restructuring operations to address changing demographics, evolving tastes, and the growing impact of television. After the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) lifted a nearly four-year television station licensing moratorium in 1952, local television stations rapidly emerged across the nation.¹²

In 1953 Alexander and his young family moved from Hannibal, Missouri, to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, to take a sportscasting position at KPIG Radio (now KMRY), only to lose the job when the station changed its format.¹³ Across town, however, the new medium of television was beckoning. With the lifting of the FCC moratorium, two Cedar Rapids television stations were slated to go on the air in fall 1953. Alexander secured a job as a booth announcer with KCRI-TV (later KCRG-TV), the new ABC affiliate in the area. It was not long before the lanky broadcaster with the

11. *San Francisco Examiner*, 11/8/1978.

12. For an example of the competition that sometimes ensued in the wake of the lifting of the licensing moratorium, see David F. McCartney and Grant Price, "The Battle for Channel 7: A Media Showdown in Waterloo," *Annals of Iowa* 59 (2000), 261–96.

13. *San Francisco Examiner*, 11/8/1978; Rick Sampson, e-mail message to author, 4/4/2005. Sampson, a veteran Iowa radio personality and journalist, lived next door to Alexander in the mid-1950s.

engaging demeanor caught the attention of a program director across town at WMT-TV, the new CBS affiliate, which eventually resulted in a promising new career opportunity for Alexander.

During an era when audiences would stare in fascination at almost anything that appeared via the magic of a cathode ray tube, early television broadcasters faced the dual challenges of filling air time and cultivating new audiences. The moment a local station went on the air, its programmers encountered a voracious medium for which little prepackaged programming existed. Out of necessity, the newer local stations followed precedents established by those local stations that had been licensed before the 1948 FCC licensing moratorium went into effect. During the moratorium period, the initial local stations developed assorted hosted format genres to fill air time, often by modifying established radio strategies. For example, news programming, talk formats, hosted children's programs, and situation comedies all trace their lineage to radio. The initial challenge for early television broadcasters was modifying the formats to accommodate television's visual qualities. Eventually, what worked in one local market was adapted in others. By the mid-1950s, standardized hosted programming genres had become pervasive across the nation. Perhaps the most ubiquitous, popular, and best-remembered artifact to emerge from these circumstances was the locally hosted children's show genre that dominated local airwaves from the early 1950s until the early 1970s.

Although children's shows came in various in-studio formats, including puppet shows, circuses, comedian hosts, and various thematic hosts, only a few could fill their airtime (which ranged from 15 minutes to more than an hour) with purely local entertainment. Thus, the key to success for most early local programs was finding pre-packaged material to accommodate the visual nature of the new medium. At that time, when major motion picture studios were hesitant to release their top quality theatrical cartoon shorts to the new medium, television programmers found a wealth of material in "shoot 'em up" Grade B western serials of the 1930s and 1940s.¹⁴ As a result, in the early 1950s, western-themed children's shows became a staple of local

14. Hollis, *Hi There*, 6. Eventually, film studios realized that television was the most profitable venue for their cartoon shorts.

programming across the nation. Further, as television historian Tim Hollis notes, “Realizing that the best way to present films would be by breaking them up with a live host, the most common solution was to put one of the station announcers in a cowboy suit and give him an appropriately rustic setting (western accent optional).”¹⁵

Given this situation, programmers at WMT-TV noticed the obvious: Alexander, an authentic rodeo cowboy with an abundance of on-air skills, was a natural choice for such a strategy. Thus, in September 1954, WMT hired Alexander as a western-themed children’s show host and weathercaster. In an interview at age 100, WMT’s then general manager William B. Quarton recalled the indirect way he found out about that decision. “The first time I became aware of Jay Alexander — Marshal J — was when I was visiting with Doug [Grant] at the [Broadcast] Park and all of a sudden a guy on a horse came charging down by the window — like he was going to crash right through it — and I said, ‘What the hell is that?’ Doug replied, ‘We hired a cowboy . . . and we’re making a promotion piece.’”¹⁶

The promotion turned out to be for a new daily children’s show, *The Marshal J Show*. The program debuted on October 3, 1954. The charismatic Alexander proved to be a rapid success at both of his new positions. A reputed master of the ad lib, Alexander tailored both jobs around his soft-spoken homespun charm.¹⁷ Each weeknight on both the 6 and 10 p.m. newscasts, he engaged Iowa’s weather-conscious farm communities with his readings of wire-service weather reports.¹⁸ While popular among adults for his 10 p.m. weather reports from atop a simu-

15. Ibid.

16. William J. Quarton, telephone interview with author and Cary J. Hahn, 6/30/2003. Because of Quarton’s age, Hahn assisted with the telephone interview and was so delighted with the anecdote that he later met with Quarton to videotape it and include it in the station’s fiftieth anniversary special.

17. Jack Voorhies, e-mail message to author and William Hufford, 7/12/2005. Voorhies, a floor director at WMT in the 1950s, directed many of Alexander’s programs.

18. William Hufford, e-mail message to author, 11/18/2006; Sampson, e-mail. Hufford, whose well-remembered air name was Ford Roberts, was a noted Iowa broadcaster for more than three decades; he worked at WMT from its inception in 1953 until the mid-1960s.

lated weather tower, Alexander delivered an even bigger hit with his children's show, a program that was shaped around Alexander's personal vision and his love for children.¹⁹

During that era, nearly every local television station in the nation — including those in Iowa — offered a hosted program to captivate children with cartoons and, more important for the stations' financial success, targeted advertising. In most cases, particularly in the smaller markets, these programs featured thematic hosts such as sea captains, space travelers, police officers, or cowboys. Usually the hosts were affable but amateurish, and the studio sets were of notoriously slapdash quality. From the outset Alexander articulated a different vision of the genre: In contrast to the syrupy, caricatured "Hi there, boys and girls!" approach to children's shows that he derided throughout his career, Alexander developed the show around three fundamentals: family appeal, education, and attention to detail.²⁰

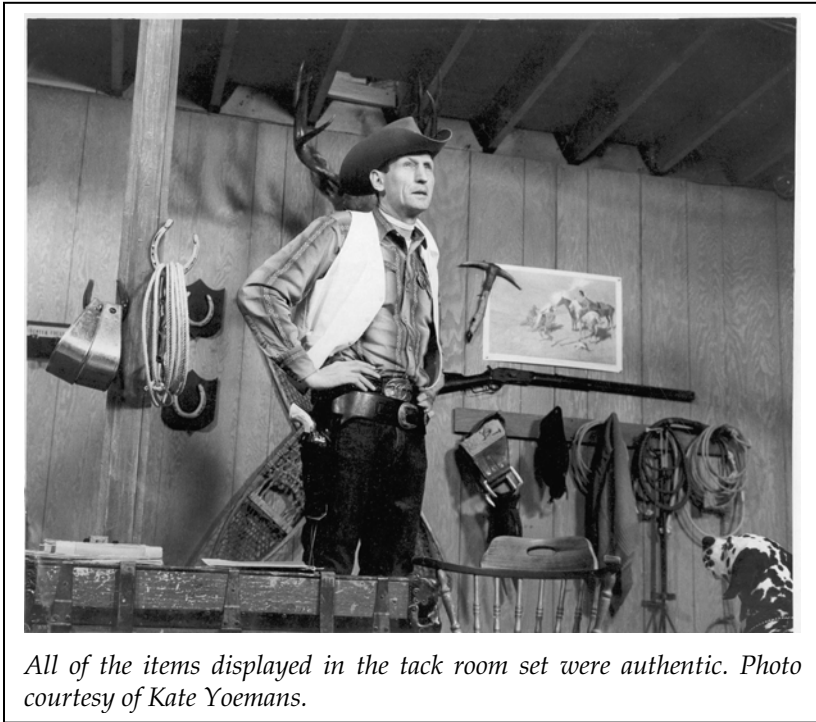
As a central feature of his daily program, Alexander worked hard to convince his audience that he was, in fact, a real cowboy and that everything on his studio tack room set, from the stirrups to the saddles to the branding irons, was real. Between film segments, Alexander amused young viewers with his rope tricks and his cowboy lingo. Each day, in what he described as an ad libbed format, he told compelling stories about the lore of the Old West and taught his young viewers about ranch and outdoor-related skills, such as taking care of animals, camping, firearm safety, and how to use particular tools. Equally notable, the real-life scoutmaster offered children value-laden advice about setting priorities and dealing with others. "I'd talk about a lot of things I guess parents would be talking to kids about — but coming from this guy on television maybe it would have more impact," he recounted in 1978.²¹

Noted Iowa broadcaster William Hufford (better known by his air name, Ford Roberts), who during his long career worked with Alexander for several years at WMT and who also worked

19. *San Francisco Examiner*, 11/8/1978.

20. John Stanley, "The Marshal from Del Rio Is Back in the Saddle at KGO," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 1964. Alexander explains his views about such issues in this undated article, which was preserved in an Alexander family scrapbook.

21. *San Francisco Examiner*, 11/8/1978.



All of the items displayed in the tack room set were authentic. Photo courtesy of Kate Yoemans.

with other Iowa children's show hosts, including Iowa broadcast legend Walt Reno and Des Moines's venerable Duane Ellett (*The Floppy Show*), explained that Alexander's authenticity and commitment to his character set him apart from his peers.

Jay's talent and his passion for his young viewers was unequalled. . . . He was so much more than the usual TV personality. Many of those who worked the kid show market did so as on a lark; it was funny to them, not the real thing. Jay lived the part. As I watched them [other children's show hosts] prepare to go on air they usually had the giggles — kind of a "Hey, look ain't I funny?" Jay did not. He was a natural and above that sort of thing.²²

AS THE 1950s PROGRESSED, the prevalence of western serials fueled a growing national infatuation with cowboys, a craze that shaped the fashion, toy, and entertainment industries for a

22. Hufford, correspondence.

decade.²³ Capitalizing on the trend, Alexander turned his daily television program into a regional happening. Former viewers portray a consistent picture of the late afternoon ritual he presided over for more than six years. After a filmed opening of him galloping up to his tack room, the scene would then seamlessly cut to a live shot of the tack room set and Alexander would lope into view. Fans recall that Alexander filled his program with colorful stories (which unbeknownst to the viewers were fictitious) about his upbringing in the south Texas borderlands. To enhance the effect, he interjected Spanish phrases into his accounts, often referring to his viewers as *vaqueros*.²⁴

The speed and intensity of Alexander's success were remarkable. Grant Price, a longstanding WMT broadcaster whose association with Alexander dates to their days in radio, observes, "He rocketed to prominence doing that cowboy thing. . . . He really lived the part and the kids absolutely worshiped him."²⁵ By mid-1955, *The Marshal J Show* was the centerpiece of WMT-TV's afternoon lineup, and Alexander had established himself as one of the premier broadcast stars in his region.²⁶

During television's first decade, the limited reception capabilities of early television receivers — particularly in a non-urban region such as eastern Iowa — required the use of rooftop antennas, which were quite effective at accessing distant signals. This factor, when combined with WMT's unusually powerful 100,000-watt signal, allowed the station and some of its performers to dominate overlapping television markets that reached across the state of Iowa and well into portions of Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Illinois.²⁷ As steadily growing regional audiences tuned

23. Hollis, *Hi There*; Karal Ann Marling, *As Seen on TV: The Visual Culture of Everyday Life in the 1950s* (Cambridge, MA, 1994).

24. Alas, no recordings of Marshal J's WMT-TV broadcasts are known to exist.

25. Grant Price, telephone interview with author, 2/11/2008. Price also is noted for establishing the Archives of Iowa Broadcasting at Wartburg College.

26. *WMT 600: Radio News from the Voice of Iowa*, August 1955, 1.

27. Hufford, e-mail message. Licensed as a multimarket station, WMT went on the air at its full signal strength of 100,000 watts — unlike the reduced-power trial periods competitors often faced. The station's designation as Channel 2, the lowest allocation in the broadcast spectrum, enabled the signal to reach well beyond its standard 80-mile primary range — in extreme circumstances reaching the Rocky Mountain region. When combined with the prevalence of

into *The Marshal J Show*, Alexander received invitations for an assortment of increasingly lucrative public appearances. Unlike his competitors, who almost invariably distinguished their on-air personas from their personal life, Alexander essentially lived his Marshal J persona as part of the eastern Iowa social milieu.²⁸

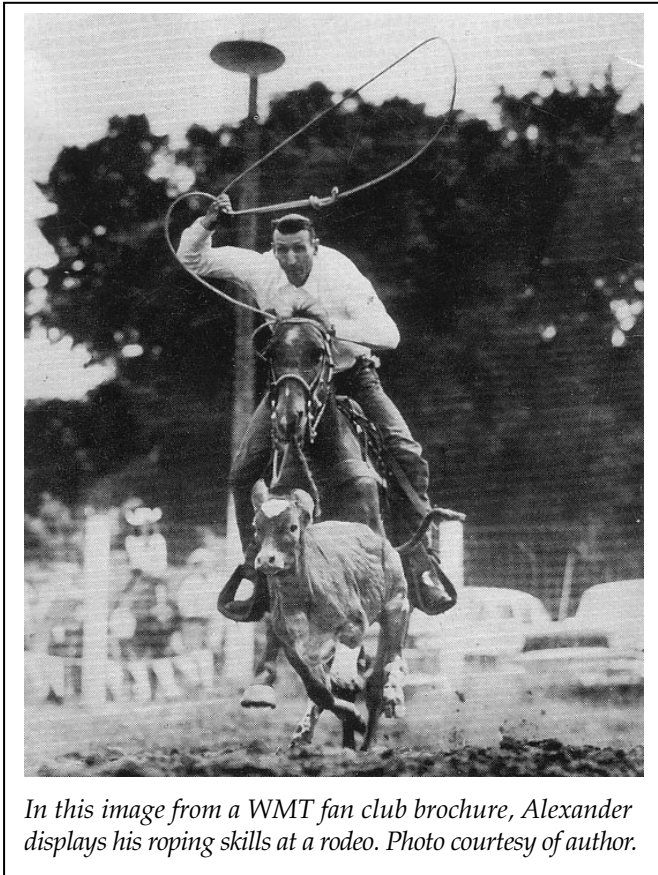
For his promotional appearances across the region, Alexander developed a repertoire of cowboy acts, ranging from storytelling to demonstrating rodeo skills. Over time, he purchased and trained seven horses, most of which supported his many public appearances. With a custom horse trailer in tow, his regular performances as “Iowa’s Cowboy Extraordinaire” became a mainstay at regional rodeos, the Iowa State Fair, county fairs, concerts, and parades, where he occasionally appeared alongside touring western stars such as Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, and Hopalong Cassidy. Photographs of such side-by-side appearances indicate the extent to which the larger-than-life local cowboy towered over the famous stars of western serials. Further, Alexander demonstrated an impressive array of roping and riding skills that, as some fans remember, made it clear who was the more authentic cowboy.²⁹

During one such promotional tour in the mid-1950s, Alexander formed a relationship with western legend Gabby Hayes, who earlier had hosted a popular network western-themed children’s show. An influential television pioneer, Hayes also served as an informal professional advisor to another emerging

rooftop and tower antennas, these factors created overlapping markets that allowed Marshal J to compete with — and often dominate — outlying broadcast markets served by local stations in Des Moines, the Quad Cities, Rochester (Minnesota), and Madison (Wisconsin). It should be noted, however, that in outlying areas, signal strength influenced viewing habits as much as program quality did.

28. Sampson, e-mail message. As longtime Iowa broadcaster (and Alexander’s former neighbor) Sampson explains, Alexander was essentially the kind, charismatic figure he portrayed on television. Furthermore, although Alexander did not initially present himself as a cowboy when he moved to Cedar Rapids, as his phenomenon grew, he changed his wardrobe, his biography, and eventually even his family’s name. Over time he bought a farm/ranch near Walker, Iowa, raised horses, and rarely appeared in public out of his trademark attire.

29. Multiple sources, such as photographs and recollections in interviews and correspondence, document Alexander’s impressive skills, his imposing presence, and his general lack of “Hollywood” artificiality.



children's show host, Fred Rogers. In both cases, Hayes counseled the up-and-coming children's show hosts that a key to success with the new medium was exploiting its sense of intimacy. Hayes explained that he accomplished this in part by looking into the camera and talking directly to "one little buckaroo out in the audience."³⁰ The "buckaroos" became "neighbors" to Mister Rogers and "vaqueros" to Marshal J, but the approach Hayes recommended set both emergent children's

30. *Fred Rogers: America's Favorite Neighbor*, PBS documentary directed by Rick Sebak, 2004. In this documentary, Rogers specifically discussed Hayes's advice and how it influenced his subsequent career. Alexander's daughter, Kate Yoe-mans, in e-mail message to author, 3/13/2004, as well as photographs and other anecdotes, document the relationship between Hayes and Alexander.



Alexander with Gabby Hayes in 1958. Photo courtesy of Kate Yoemans.

show hosts apart from many of their competitors. Rogers, Alexander, and a handful of others played themselves rather than caricatures; moreover, they talked “to” not “at” their young viewers. Such hosts eschewed in-studio “peanut galleries” and, instead, addressed each individual viewer directly through personal appeals to the camera. They packaged their reassuring messages with soothing voices and nonjudgmental tones. Alexander outlined his philosophy on these matters in a 1964 newspaper interview in response to a question about why he shunned peanut galleries:

There is nothing glamorous about a TV studio. Little people have their own imaginations and dream worlds, and if you bring them in here they would be disillusioned at the sight of all the cables and cameras. . . . We should give them more credit: they have a level of intelligence all their own. I try to reach that level without preaching or whining or acting like a boob. The secret is to teach but entertain at the same time.³¹

31. Stanley, “The Marshal from Del Rio Is Back.”

Unlike Rogers, who aligned himself with noncommercial public television beginning in 1954, Alexander embraced commercialism, targeted older children rather than preschoolers, and strapped a real .45 caliber pistol to his hip.³² A 60-year-old woman who once counted herself as one of Marshal J's vaqueros, explains, "By today's terms, Marshal J was co-o-o-o-ol."³³

Noted for his robust approach to life, Alexander's zeal occasionally took forms that were not in his best interests. For example, when he and Gabby Hayes briefly ended up in jail in East Dubuque, Illinois, for staging a gunfight (with blanks) in the main street while both were intoxicated, WMT station manager Doug Grant had to intervene to convince East Dubuque officials that no harm had occurred.³⁴ Such incidents represented an enduring problem for Alexander and a major source of frustration for Grant and other WMT officials. The basic problem was fairly straightforward: at some point after the war Alexander became an alcoholic, and alcohol and live television broadcasting — particularly children's shows — did not mix.³⁵

During his tenure at WMT, some of Alexander's personal struggles played out over eastern Iowa's airwaves, a factor that

32. One of the most controversial aspects of the genre, a factor that eventually contributed to its demise, involved the standard practice of using the host to pitch products live to an audience of children. Alexander, a master of this skill, pitched everything from breakfast cereal to dairy products on his program.

33. Sampson received this e-mail account from a listener who responded to an on-air query designed to support this research project.

34. Hufford remembers the incident, which, because of Grant's efforts, was not picked up in local newspapers. Colby Bowers, telephone interview with author, 4/25/2005. Bowers, a Dubuque native, remembers that even as this and other incidents were not covered in the media, accounts quickly circulated through informal gossip channels throughout the area.

35. The relationship between Alexander's alcoholism and his war experiences remains a mystery. However, both S.S. *Leopoldville* survivors and historians acknowledge that many survivors were plagued with symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, including substance abuse. Yoemans, e-mail message; Hank Anderson, telephone interview with author, 6/24/2003; Allan Andrade, e-mail message to author, 9/29/2005; Ray Roberts, e-mail message to author, 6/11/2003. Anderson, a S. S. *Leopoldville* survivor, experienced a religious epiphany that night and became a Presbyterian minister as a result. Andrade and Roberts both have published books on the disaster and have interviewed numerous survivors, many of whom are now deceased. Allan Andrade, *S.S. Leopoldville, December 24, 1944* (New York, 1997); Ray Roberts, *The Leopoldville Trilogy* (2001).

has shaped the way Alexander has been remembered ever since. At least twice, the effects of alcohol undermined Alexander's on-air performance at WMT, each time resulting in punitive action by the station. In August 1955 the effects of alcohol caused Alexander to become tongue-tied to the point of unintelligibility while delivering the weather report on the 10 p.m. news. The incident permanently ended his career as a weathercaster. In about 1960, during *The Marshal J Show*, Alexander grimaced into the close-up camera while tasting a sponsor's cereal; later he was unable to complete a demonstration on how to string a bow-and-arrow set.³⁶

As was the case with the Gabby Hayes incident, the effects of alcohol also occasionally undermined Alexander's public appearances. The most well-remembered example, one that has been the subject of urban legends, occurred in August 1958 during a performance in Dysart, Iowa. That day, Alexander performed a popular part of his act in which he shot at floating helium balloons with a .45 caliber revolver that was modified to fire birdshot. During the demonstration, as one balloon drifted to the ground, he carelessly reholstered his pistol and shot himself in the leg in front of hundreds of spectators.³⁷

Yet even as Alexander's drinking problems caused numerous headaches for WMT officials, those who knew him personally recount that he was so well liked by his coworkers and so adored by his fans that station management went to great lengths to avoid firing him.³⁸ Thus, management sometimes looked the other way; other times it tried suspensions. More than once Marshal J unexpectedly "went on vacation" or was replaced by "Cousin" Don Hastings while the marshal "helped a friend who broke his leg on a cattle drive." Each time Marshal

36. Hufford, who was providing the sportscast the night of the botched weathercast, said that Alexander acted normally before he went on the air, but the heat of the lights apparently brought out the effects of the alcohol. As his weathercast progressed, his speech became increasingly slurred. Several sources witnessed the television show incident both in the studio and over the air.

37. *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, 8/5/1958.

38. Terry Hull, e-mail message to author, 4/27/2005. Hull, a close family friend of the Alexanders in Iowa, explained the situation. Hufford and Sampson confirmed the account.

J disappeared, however, the station was deluged with complaints from Alexander's growing legion of fans.³⁹

Ultimately, the star of WMT-TV's late afternoon programming delivered so much to the station and its sponsors that they generally kept the drinking controversies at bay. This was particularly true beginning in 1957, when, because of cultural and industry trends, Alexander's popularity exceeded anything the market had experienced previously. In 1957 and 1958 major motion picture studios finally released their top-line cartoons and theatrical shorts (most notably *Popeye*, *Bugs Bunny*, and *The Three Stooges*) for television broadcast. WMT, as the dominant station in its regional market, quickly obtained the rights for this premier programming and highlighted it on Marshal J's afternoon program. The new programming, by moving away from western serials to cartoons, significantly broadened the cowboy star's appeal to younger children. These factors, along with the station's new 2,000-foot broadcast tower, which dwarfed the competition's 800-foot towers, enabled WMT and Marshal J to dominate regional television markets. As a result, Alexander caught the attention of industry pundits outside of the Midwest. In late 1957 a national television fan magazine highlighted Alexander with a photo spread and biographical article that emphasized his popularity and authentic cowboy persona:

His greeting of "Buenos tardes vaqueros" signals the start of another assignment of hard-riding, fast-shooting excitement with western films and special movie, rodeo and working cowboy guests. . . . And it is no mere television cowboy doing the talking. Jay spent his boyhood on a Texas cattle ranch learning cowboying as a business. . . . And out back of the WMT studios are twenty acres across which cameras can follow Jay and his horses — while his deputies watch from their own particular "ranch houses."⁴⁰

Alexander's rising popularity coincided with America's growing infatuation with television westerns. By autumn 1958, network television had outgrown its roots in Grade B western serials and was featuring 24 adult primetime westerns each week, including seven of the top ten programs in the Nielsen

39. Hufford and Sampson e-mail messages.

40. "Tall in the Saddle," *TV Radio Mirror*, November 1957, 10.

ratings.⁴¹ With fifty million Americans tuning into network westerns each night, the already popular Marshal J had become a highly marketable commodity in major television markets across the nation. WMT management became increasingly aware of their cowboy star's marketability, and they began to share Alexander's vision of expanding his variant of the children's show genre to bigger markets across the nation. WMT filmed a series of Marshal J's programs and marketed them as a syndication proposal, but without success.⁴²

BY 1960, Alexander sought to personally capitalize on his vision and take it beyond the eastern Iowa market. Late that year, KPIX-TV, the CBS affiliate in San Francisco, offered Alexander a position that represented a significant increase in salary and proximity to broadcasting's network production facilities in California. Alexander told Doug Grant, WMT-TV's station manager, that he planned to accept the offer. Grant later explained to his son David why the station did not fight to keep its star:

As a matter of fact the salary they paid at WMT-TV was not that much. . . . In the TV business and in a minor market like Cedar Rapids–Waterloo, the management had to get used to the idea that many talented people would eventually get better jobs and leave. We were like the minor leagues of television.⁴³

Thus, in mid-January 1961 Alexander bid his young viewers a final "*hasta luego vaqueros*" and moved his program to California. Although many former fans remember feeling traumatized by this sudden development, the prefabricated nature of the genre ensured that WMT suffered little from Alexander's departure. Within two weeks, Grant recruited local amateur actor Max Hahn to replace Alexander as host of the daily children's show. The WMT staff then worked with Hahn to create the role

41. Michael T. Marsden and Jack Nachbar, "The Modern Popular Western: Radio, Television, Film and Print," in *A Literary History of the American West* (Fort Worth, TX, 1987), 1267.

42. Rick Plummer, e-mail message to author, 9/23/2004.

43. David Grant, e-mail message to author and Rick Plummer, 9/29/2003. David Grant worked on WMT-TV's floor crew and managed the thriving official Marshal J Fan Club.

of the avuncular “Dr. Max” to maintain the genre’s thematic structure. Although many Marshal J fans still are quick to voice their opinions that Dr. Max was inferior to Marshal J in nearly every respect, the not-so-exacting genre proved to be very accommodating of the change. Hahn seamlessly transitioned into the host’s role by maintaining Alexander’s conversational format and his premier cartoon rotation.⁴⁴ Thus, even as *The Dr. Max Show* may have been far less compelling than what Marshal J offered, the staid Cedar Rapids–Waterloo television market nicely supported the program for 20 more years, and it overwrote many memories of Marshal J with memories of Dr. Max.

For Alexander, moving an intact children’s show format to a larger market represented a major career risk.⁴⁵ Unlike in Iowa, in San Francisco Alexander faced stiff competition from a bevy of established children’s show hosts, some of whom achieved legendary status.⁴⁶ Unfazed, on February 13, 1961, at 6:30 p.m., Alexander looked into KPIX-TV cameras for the first time and then turned on the charm that he had cultivated so carefully in Iowa. That evening he enchanted his young viewers by introducing them not only to himself and his fictitious Running J Ranch, but he also introduced a 3-month-old Dalmatian puppy named Rowdy — Marshal J’s trademark companion from then on.⁴⁷

44. “Remembering Dr. Max and Mombo,” video directed by Cary J. Hahn, 1996. As Max Hahn (no relation to Cary J. Hahn) explained in a 1981 interview that was included in this video tribute to his program, after Alexander’s sudden departure, WMT programming director Doug Grant searched for a different personality to plug directly into Marshal J’s established format. Thus, Dr. Max’s avuncular world traveler character was inserted seamlessly into the existing program structure. The two-week transition was so seamless, in fact, that Marshal J’s wood-paneled tack room set was modified only slightly to create Dr. Max’s wood-paneled basement set.

45. Hollis, in *Hi There*, explains that children’s shows were based on fostering local identification. Consequently, while some hosts moved to larger stations within markets and others moved geographically to parallel markets, comparatively few moved full-fledged programs across geography to larger markets. Those who successfully made such moves represent some of the genre’s most renowned personalities, such as Chicago’s Bill Jackson.

46. *San Francisco Chronicle*, 9/16/2005. These figures include San Francisco broadcast legends Bob “Captain Satellite” March, Bruce “Skipper” Sedly, and “Mayor Art” Finley.

47. Ralph Garry, *For the Young Viewer: Television Programming for Children, at the Local Level* (New York, 1962), 100.



*Alexander with Rowdy, his trademark companion in San Francisco.
Photo courtesy of author.*

From the outset, Alexander's low-key delivery and simple program format were as well received in California as they had been in Iowa.⁴⁸ Gary Fissel, a member of Alexander's KPIX-TV floor crew, recalls Alexander's sudden impact: "He went straight to the top of the ratings — almost instantly. This market had never seen anything quite like what he brought to it."⁴⁹

In light of Alexander's near total disappearance from public consciousness in later years, it is easy to overlook the extent and intensity of his initial popularity throughout northern California. During the peak years of the nation's television cowboy craze, between 1961 and 1964, Marshal J's image and name were pervasive throughout the Bay area. His daily program was a mainstay in the Bay area's dinner-hour television market, and advertisements featuring Alexander were displayed prominently

48. Robert Rice, telephone interview with author, 8/10/2004; Gary Fissel, telephone interview with author, 8/4/2004; Bob March, e-mail message to author, 7/31/2003. Rice and Fissel were members of the KPIX floor crew. March is a well-remembered San Francisco children's show host from that era.

49. Fissel interview. Four other floor crew members confirmed this observation.



Clint Eastwood appears on KPIX with Marshal J in about 1962. Photo courtesy of Kate Yoemans.

throughout the area on billboards, on the sides of public transportation vehicles, in advertisements in professional sports programs, and in the pages of San Francisco's major newspapers.⁵⁰ Alexander was equally visible on northern California's public appearance circuit; during the early 1960s, he was present at nearly every significant event in the San Francisco area that involved cowboys. And when a western star such as Gabby Hayes, Roy Rogers, or Clint Eastwood visited San Francisco during that period, they often appeared on *The Marshal J Show*.

The nature of Alexander's popularity and presence in California differed, however, from the daily ritual his 4 p.m. television program had represented for midwestern households. The highly competitive San Francisco broadcast market did not accommodate such total dominance and such comfortable predictability. In an effort to outflank competitors, KPIX shifted

50. Occasionally some of these advertisements still appear for sale on Web-based sites such as eBay.

The Marshal J Show to four different timeslots in three years.⁵¹ Compared to Iowa, the San Francisco area was larger, more competitive, and more attuned to cultural trends. Adapting to these distinctions, a more polished Alexander catered to local tastes with more topical, wry humor that even middle-school-aged children would repeat at school.⁵² As a result, huge audiences continued to tune in daily and flood KPIX with fan mail.⁵³ At public appearances, Alexander was often mobbed by an equal mix of enthusiastic girls and boys ranging in age from toddlers to teenagers. Alexander relished the interaction and, as he did in Iowa, he greeted individual fans with his trademark “Hi Whitey!” “Hi Red!” or whatever cowboy nickname best addressed each child’s appearance. Reflecting the intimacy he established with his viewers, he typically would fold his memorably long legs into a distinctive squat so he could address even the smallest of the children eye-to-eye.⁵⁴

Former colleagues and members of KPIX floor crews, who saw their share of major celebrities pass through the studios, remember Alexander as one of the most charismatic and talented people they ever met. Fissel explains, “Jay had that rare ability to light up a room when he walked in. If you ever met him, it was an unforgettable experience.”⁵⁵ Consequently, KPIX management initially was thrilled with its new cowboy star and quickly signed him to an eight-year contract. In late 1961, in response to a National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) survey of children’s programs across the nation, KPIX presented Alex-

51. Television stations do not document such strategies. The only consistently viable way to assess such issues in retrospect is to sift through old television listings in newspaper archives. See Ted Okuda and Jack Mulqueen, *The Golden Age of Chicago Children’s Television* (Chicago, 2004), in which the authors discuss the rationale associated with shifting local schedules to promote ratings objectives in larger markets.

52. David Kaye, e-mail message to author, 6/20/2003. Kaye, a San Francisco fan, specifically recalls such discussions during his middle school years. Alexander’s daughter Kate Yoemans confirmed that her father’s act became far more polished during this period.

53. Yoemans, e-mail message. Yoemans has maintained a small family scrapbook that includes photographs of such events. Most family photographs, however, were destroyed in a 1980 fire.

54. *San Francisco Examiner*, 5/3/1964.

55. Fissel, interview. See also Rice, e-mail message.



Alexander greets some of his young fans, ca. 1963. Photo courtesy of Kate Yoemans.

ander as an exemplar of children’s television at its best. A year later, the NAB published the survey results as a book, *For the Young Viewer*, which highlighted Marshal J’s contributions to children’s television, lauding him for his efforts to “help keep alive an authentic picture of the period and region that made this country’s primary contribution to folk history.”⁵⁶

For a while, Alexander’s success, both on air and in other media ventures, seemed promising. In an effort to capitalize further on his popularity, Alexander marketed himself as a western-themed model and character actor. As an inaugural Marlboro Man model for the famous Marlboro Country cigarette campaign and as a national model for Levi’s jeans, his distinctive silhouette appeared on billboards, in magazines, and in

56. Garry, *For the Young Viewer*, 100. The survey was conducted in response to growing criticism that the genre was over-commercialized and generally vacuous.

Marlboro Country

In all 50 states, the big switch is to Marlboro

December 1957? That's when Marlboro came to town. All of a sudden, the United States had a favorite cigarette with a lion on the red. Sales started growing in every town, in every country, in every state, and they haven't stopped yet. Today, the whole place is Marlboro country—land of the filter cigarette with the red-tipped lion.

What's behind all this popularity? Marlboro's famous Richmond, Virginia, roots of origin, golden tobacco (the same tobacco grown) . . . and the pure white filter that's 2 1/2" long. Why don't you pack up with Marlboro? Pack or box, you get a lot to like.

Sold and enjoyed in all 50 states and in more than 100 countries around the world

Imagine this as a full, two-page spread in the oversized *Life Magazine* in 1963. This double-truck advertisement represents one of the earliest national appearances of the Marlboro Country campaign. It depicts Alexander lighting up a cigarette while standing on a California beach. In all, Alexander appeared in approximately six advertisements, most of which appeared in early 1963. *Life Magazine*, 11/8/1962.

newspapers around the world.⁵⁷ Alexander also played several small roles on prime time western classics such as *Gunsmoke* and alongside Dale Robertson on *The Iron Horse*, a shorter-lived series.⁵⁸ By May 1963, when Marshal J was toasted as grand marshal of the Bay area's world-famous *Mother Lode Round-up Parade*, Alexander's career was at its peak.

ALEXANDER'S SUCCESS in California proved to be short lived, however, and, as was the case in Iowa, alcohol was implicated. California colleagues recall that by late 1963 allegations of minor alcohol incidents were making some KPIX executives skittish. The bottom fell out in April 1964 when police charged Alexander with assault and battery after he scuffled with a rude

57. *Life*, 11/8/1962.

58. *San Francisco Examiner*, 11/8/1978. Alexander family photographs document some of these events. *The Iron Horse* ran on ABC-TV from 1966 to 1968.

waiter at an upscale restaurant in Sausalito. When news outlets prominently reported the incident, KPIX executives panicked and quickly fired Alexander, charging that the negative publicity was a breach of contract. Yet even as KPIX insulated itself by putting a “Marshal J clause” in all future contracts, Alexander’s young fans publicly protested KPIX’s action.⁵⁹ Thus, by the summer of 1964, when Alexander was acquitted of assault charges after it became known that the waiter in question had a penchant for provoking celebrities and suing them if they retaliated, Bay area ABC affiliate KGO had resurrected *The Marshal J Show* in its morning lineup.⁶⁰

After spending a decade helping children unwind after school, however, Alexander, with his laid-back style, was less suited for the 7:30 a.m. weekday time slot. Furthermore, instead of featuring the top-drawer theatrical cartoons that had been a Marshal J centerpiece since 1957, KGO saddled Alexander with poor quality made-for-TV cartoons.⁶¹ An ill-conceived mountain-man sidekick not only failed to compensate for the inferior cartoons, but some fans even recall that the sidekick’s presence undermined the intimacy Alexander had cultivated with his audience. Although *The Marshal J Show* remained reasonably popular, by most accounts the magic was fading. As the 1960s progressed, television cowboys drifted out of style, and stations increasingly replaced costly in-studio programming with less expensive syndication packages. By 1967, as the counterculture and social turmoil swept cross the San Francisco Bay area, Marshal J had become an anachronism. As an early reflector of a national trend that within approximately five years eliminated most

59. *San Francisco Examiner*, 5/3/1964. San Francisco newspapers ran several articles addressing the incident and Alexander’s firing. Ron Magers, e-mail to author, 8/7/2004. Magers, a noted Chicago newscaster who joined the KPIX staff shortly after Alexander retired from broadcasting, recalls signing the “Marshal J clause” upon joining KPIX.

60. *San Francisco Examiner*, 11/8/1978; Rice, e-mail message.

61. Hollis, *Hi There*, discusses the emergence of quickly produced made-for-television cartoons. Of all these lower-quality cartoons, few were inferior to the rock-bottom *Clutch Cargo* and *Space Angel* series Marshal J featured on KGO. These cartoons used a bizarre animation technique known as synchro-vox, which involved superimposing actors’ moving mouths over the cartoon images. Often, the moving mouths were the only motion in the otherwise static cartoons.

of the hosted children's show genre, KGO officials explained to Alexander that his program was no longer cost effective.⁶² Thus, in April 1967 Alexander quietly left broadcast television forever.

Without the creative outlet television afforded, Alexander's post-broadcasting years proved to be a long series of personal and professional setbacks that hit a nadir in March 1982 when his wife of 35 years died of cancer.⁶³ By then besieged with assorted chronic health problems himself, Alexander died of natural causes only ten months later. To the end, he lamented the passing of an era in broadcasting and popular culture that, to him, once seemed as if it would last forever. In November 1978, during what proved to be his final public interview, Alexander ruefully told a *San Francisco Examiner* reporter that television "wasn't a job for me, it was, well, a love. I read one time that someone said, 'When it ceases to be fun, I'll get out of it.' Well, it never ceased to be fun for me. I got out only because of trends and economics that squeezed me out."⁶⁴

When Alexander died four years later at age 61, some pundits considered him so irrelevant that the *Cedar Rapids Gazette* acknowledged his death and career with an 83-word obituary:

Jay "Marshal J" Alexander, 60, of San Mateo, Calif., formerly of Cedar Rapids died Tuesday at San Diego, Calif. following a long illness. He was host of a children's show called "The Marshal J Show" on WMT-TV from March 1954 until late 1960, when he moved to California.⁶⁵

In California, the Bay area's most dominant newspaper, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, ignored the story altogether.⁶⁶

62. Neil Hickey, "Skipper Chuck and Buckskin Bill Are Not Feeling Very Jolly," *TV Guide*, 6/2/1973. Yoemans confirmed this account.

63. During this period Alexander's most notable job involved calling whale shows at a Bay area aquatic park. For a short time he also sold automobiles, and he also held a short-term public relations position. In 1980 he briefly returned to cable television to provide color commentary for BMX motocross races.

64. *San Francisco Examiner*, 11/8/1978.

65. *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, 1/19/1983. The obituary incorrectly lists Alexander's age as 60 rather than 61.

66. In contrast, the then fading *San Francisco Examiner* featured a nine-paragraph account on its obituary page based heavily on the interview for the 1978 *Examiner* article cited earlier. *San Francisco Examiner*, 1/21/1983.

A DECADE AFTER ALEXANDER'S DEATH, as part of efforts to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of WMT-TV (which changed its call letters to KGAN in 1981), veteran KGAN reporter Cary J. Hahn sought to produce a retrospective segment on Marshal J's impact on the station. However, despite joining with amateur broadcast historians and chasing scores of leads to California and beyond, Hahn was able to find only approximately six still photographs and a couple of promotional items — all of which could fit easily into a small manila envelope. As he explains, like so much of the “here today, gone today” era of live local television, almost nothing, other than memories, remained of Marshal J. Closer examination, however, reveals that even as much of Alexander's world indeed has disappeared, he has maintained a revealing presence within the domain of collective memory in both Iowa and California. Furthermore, as discoveries in the course of the research for this article have revealed, collective memories have proved less ephemeral and more fecund than Hahn's experience might suggest. In fact, oral histories collected from former colleagues and fans indicate the extent to which Marshal J has been remembered with particular ambivalence in both Iowa and California.

The disposable nature of Alexander's genre and its attendant lack of documentation carved out few formal spaces for articulating memories of Marshal J with one exception: urban legends. During his time in Iowa, Alexander's conspicuous problems with alcohol fueled a good deal of gossip among viewers across the region. After he left for California, much of that gossip was preserved in Iowa urban legends, some of which still persist. Although some Marshal J urban legends represent reasonably accurate accounts of actual events, others are wildly inaccurate or totally fictitious.⁶⁷ Urban legends do offer

67. In some respects, Marshal J urban legends represent a genre of their own in eastern Iowa. Many involve the very real incidents on the weathercast, *The Marshal J Show*, and the leg-shooting incident. Even though relatively few living viewers witnessed these events, many respondents will spontaneously recite variants or composites of these genuine happenings. The most common of the fictitious legends takes the form of a Marshal J version of the age-old, and thoroughly discredited, “That oughta hold the little bastards” myth. In many tellings, this fictitious miscue led to his equally fictitious firing at WMT. California respondents occasionally cite the latter fallacious legend; they also cite various exaggerated accounts of the 1964 restaurant incident.

insights into cultural values and perceptions, but to the extent that such narratives are inaccurate or lack perspective, they have undermined Iowa's historical record in several respects. Most notably, they have been partially responsible for marginalizing Alexander as a legitimate historical subject, and they also have perpetuated widely believed historical inaccuracies. The most pervasive canard in this respect, one that has undermined the historical record for nearly five decades, incorrectly claims that WMT summarily fired Alexander, purportedly for the bow-and-arrow stringing incident.⁶⁸

As oral histories move beyond the urban legends, however, it becomes clear that, among certain age groups, Marshal J is remembered as a distinctive cultural phenomenon. These accounts, many of which represent enthusiastic responses to open-ended inquiries placed in newspapers and on Internet sites, portray the affective nature of such early television rituals and popular culture trends. A repeated theme emerges from these responses: Former viewers give a clear sense that Marshal J was not merely a program that they watched each day, but the 1950s icon also represents a vital part of who they were during that halcyon era.

Such memories generally fall into two categories: those informed by personal knowledge of or interaction with Alexander, and those based on experience watching *The Marshal J Show* and participating in the daily rituals it represented. Those who knew or met Alexander offer anecdotes that help reconstruct his larger-than-life presence. Examples of these memories include accounts of enthralled children watching the cowboy gallop across a cornfield from his Cedar Rapids home to a nearby elementary school, dismount, and play unselfconsciously with schoolchildren during recess. Some fans fondly remember waiting amid

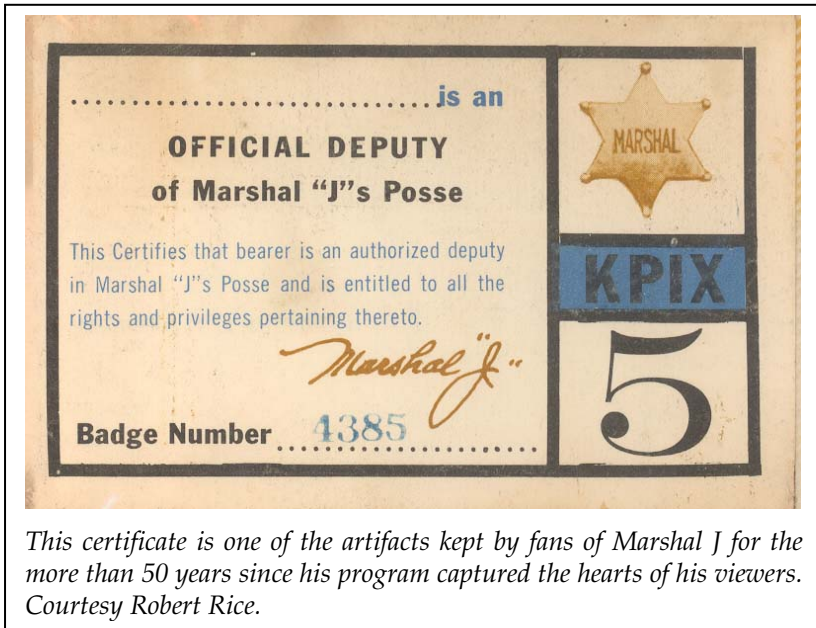
68. Multiple sources, both family friends and some former WMT colleagues, assert that this claim is false. As David Grant notes, "Just for the record Jay was not dismissed. . . . At least his boss (my father) told me that he left to go to a much better job on the coast." A variety of documented events appear to confirm this account. An article in the *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, 1/18/1961, portrays a well-planned farewell social gathering the Hulls hosted in honor of the Alexanders. Alexander also made a well-advertised and somewhat triumphant return to Cedar Rapids in August 1962. *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, 8/5/1962. Furthermore, Alexander continued to make personal appearances in Cedar Rapids well after his final appearance on WMT. *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, 1/15/1961.

throng of children to greet Alexander as he arrived by helicopter at various public appearances; one remembers the thrill of furtively touching the bullets on Marshal J's gun belt as he walked by. Several of those who remember watching Marshal J on television recall a daily ritual that consisted of unwinding after school by changing from school clothes into western gear, then settling in to watch Marshal J. For children in the Bay area near the end of his career, the show became a morning ritual. Film star Tom Hanks explained to a worldwide television audience in 2008 how television rituals structured daily life during the 1950s and '60s: "Time is not told by watches or clocks but by whatever is on TV. After Marshal J and the cartoons you go to school."⁶⁹

Contrary to what seemed to be the case when Alexander died in 1983, material artifacts of his career and social presence did not totally disappear. As it turns out, a good deal of tangible history related to Marshal J was preserved for five decades in closets, drawers, basements, and attics of his former viewers. Even more so than oral histories, these personal collections, all of which were assembled as individual acts separate from any social network or monetary concerns, attest to very personalized perceptions of value. Several fans, for example, provided historically revealing promotional material, including various photo composites and a thought-to-be-lost 45-rpm record of Marshal J telling stories. One woman forwarded a ruler that Marshal J had signed at a promotional appearance 50 years ago. She offered a poignant account of how she waited patiently behind hundreds of children for the chance to meet her television hero, how she prized the ruler throughout her grade-school years, and how she kept it for five decades.⁷⁰ Even more poignant, a mother, now in her late seventies, sent photographs of Alexander providing a special show to her terminally ill four-year-old son, who soon thereafter would die of leukemia. "That

69. Tom Hanks, "Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Induction Remarks: The Dave Clark Five," speech presented at the Twenty-third Annual Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony, Waldorf Astoria Hotel, New York, 3/10/2008. Hanks, who grew up in the San Francisco Bay area, refers to Alexander's tenure on KGO-TV in San Francisco from 1964 to 1967.

70. Kathy Warden, correspondence with author, 6/14/2005.



was one of the best days our David could have had. He so enjoyed the things Marshal J did for him. . . . I will never forget the kindness shown to a little boy who did not have too long to live.”⁷¹

As a reflector of collective memory that has had little formal outlet, the act of individually saving particular local television artifacts gives historians a better sense of how viewers experienced particular broadcast rituals and how they valued those experiences. In the case of Alexander and other poorly documented local broadcasting icons, such artifacts represent a useful tool for documenting the lost content of such historical mass media rituals and understanding their affective impact on viewers in time and over time. Ironically, this reality represents perhaps the only aspect of his long-term social influence that did not escape Jay Alexander himself.

Until the end of his life, the long-retired broadcaster remained astonished and gratified each time a former viewer (in these instances in California) recognized him and produced a

71. Patricia Nieves, correspondence with author, 11/13/2005.

treasured Marshal J promotional item that was accompanied by nostalgic stories about a bygone era. During his final public interview, Alexander described such an encounter and mused, "Imagine that, he must have kept that badge in a drawer or something for fifteen years."⁷² Decades later, the spontaneous emergence of similar artifacts reflects the nature and significance of the broader issues Alexander's story represents. In these respects, a 50-year-old autographed ruler can measure more than inches and feet; it also can help historians gauge a sense of memory, a sense of ritual, and a sense of a past that otherwise would have escaped the net of historical study.

72. *San Francisco Examiner*, 11/8/1978.

Book Reviews and Notices

The Upper Country: French Enterprise in the Colonial Great Lakes, by Claiborne A. Skinner. Regional Perspectives on Early America. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008. xiv, 202 pp. Glossary, Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliographical essay, index. \$50.00 cloth, \$25.00 paper.

Reviewer Justin M. Carroll is a Ph.D. candidate at Michigan State University. He is working on a dissertation titled "John Askin's Many Beneficial Binds: Sex, Servitude, and Family in the Great Lakes."

A lively and lucid work of historical synthesis, Claiborne Skinner's *The Upper Country* provides a detailed exploration of the French colonial regime in the Midwest from 1689 to 1763. By asking what triggered the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), Claiborne recovers a cast of often overlooked historical characters, such as Père Marquette, sieur de La Salle, Comte de Frontenac, Henri de Tonti, and sieur de Cadillac, whose imperial designs, political machinations, and economic interest pushed the French into the Indian-defined upper country or the *pays d'en haut*. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the fur-rich Great Lakes basin proved to be a region of perpetual imperial contestation as the Iroquois invaded the land and their British allies moved toward Canada. In the face of this threat, the French and the devastated Indians of the Great Lakes allied, successfully defeated the Iroquois, stymied the British, and secured the interior. However, as the external threat dissipated in the early eighteenth century, the French-Indian alliance became increasingly fragmented, rebellious, and internally conflicted. By the 1750s, when the British began again to push into the Ohio Valley, the French aggressively overreacted and, Skinner argues, precipitated the Seven Years' War.

Over the past 30 years, historians such as Richard White, James Merrill, Daniel Usner, and others have employed regional approaches to the encounter between Euro-Americans and American Indians to construct powerful explanatory models, and have demonstrated the importance of non-Anglo-American experiences for understanding colonial North America. By focusing largely on the Great Lakes states of Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Indiana, Skinner's work illuminates a history of North America that most "American students have little awareness of" (x). It thereby frames the French history of the region as central to understanding U.S. history and American identity.

As Fred Andersen argues in his magisterial *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754–1766* that the Seven Years' War was the central event of the eighteenth century, Skinner demonstrates that the standard narrative of North American history cannot be cast as proceeding east to west. However, as a regional history, *The Upper Country* stops short of truly connecting French imperial and colonial enterprise to the larger processes of North American development. For example, by ending the narrative before the Seven Years' War, Skinner misses the chance to show how the French persisted, often through intermarriage with the region's Indians and their continued importance within the Great Lakes' fur-trade economy, to influence later British and American political, social, and economic understanding.

Postured toward undergraduates and survey courses, and largely eschewing historiographical debate, except when Skinner writes that "expediency has always taken precedence over culture" (xii), *The Upper Country* richly deserves a place in the classroom or on the bookshelf. While light on historiography, which the author readily admits, the book includes a detailed and informative bibliographical essay that alerts readers to the major historical literature on the French and the Great Lakes. What most makes this book useful and important to those interested in midwestern history, however, is that Skinner goes beyond politics, economics, and war, and actually details the cultural and social lives of the French and Indians in the Great Lakes, which is a difficult task. Moreover, Skinner's mining and close reading of primary sources, along with his well-written and concise narrative, brings the historical actors and events to life and succeeds in re-creating and contextualizing the Great Lakes world those individuals inhabited.

The Sangamo Frontier: History and Archaeology in the Shadow of Lincoln, by Robert Mazrim. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007. x, 352 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, index. \$55.00 cloth, \$20.00 paper.

Reviewer Debra A. Reid is associate professor of history at Eastern Illinois University. She teaches and writes about material culture, public history, and African American history.

Robert Mazrim has produced an engaging forensic analysis of what occurred during the frontier era along the Edwards Trace in Illinois. That focus might not attract readers, but the more provocative title should. Mazrim draws from a period place name, Sangamo, thus accurately reflecting the blending of Native, French, and American cultures that occurred in the region between the 1790s and the 1840s.

Mazrim emphasizes the years between the War of 1812 and the end of the Black Hawk War as the period when Native culture ceased to exist in the area and French influence gave way to American ideals based on entrepreneurship and consumerism. His reference to Abraham Lincoln in the subtitle reflects the ways the notable American's legacy has drawn amateur and professional historians and archaeologists to study the places Lincoln trod, particularly Springfield and New Salem, but also indicates the ways his legacy has obscured and even helped obliterate material evidence of what really occurred over a transition period during the early nineteenth century. Mazrim studies what lies buried literally beneath the sod and figuratively under accretions of memory and forgetfulness, myth and abandonment. This book is about so much more than the title implies.

The Sangamo Frontier addresses a goal that anyone interested in local history can appreciate. Mazrim sets out to show that "this place (like many places) was once much different" (3). He uses archaeology to ferret out the difference because "archaeology has a peculiar ability to enhance and also to challenge the written word" (3). Examples abound, starting with the term *frontier*, which could denote isolation and cultural change, as Frederick Jackson Turner argued, but which Mazrim argues became a zone where Americans tried to be civilized by possessing the most fashionable ceramics, building rural industry, and creating opportunities for commerce. They brought their culture with them.

Mazrim combines traditional historical sources (public records, correspondence, period accounts, and secondary sources) with archaeological evidence. The structure of the book reflects this blending. History and archaeology coexist throughout *The Sangamo Frontier*, but the last half of the book emphasizes the application of the method to the place. Mazrim's expertise shines in this section as he shares findings from professional excavations that he managed in places along Edwards Trace. Those excavations occurred more often in the shadow of the wrecking ball than in Lincoln's shadow. Mazrim balances places that prospered during the frontier transition era, such as Ile's store in Springfield, with places that progress bypassed and founders abandoned, specifically Sangamo. Then he concludes with a sobering account of how public enthusiasm for Lincoln led to historic manipulation at New Salem, starting during the 1880s and culminating in the 1930s with the apparent destruction of historic evidence so the myth associated with the place survived and contradictory evidence in the form of the actual site of the Rutledge Tavern could be eradicated.

A wide range of readers should find Mazrim's book appealing, including historians of the early Midwest, frontier and borderland

experiences, state and local history, and public history. Critical analysis of the public's role in preserving the past has appeared recently in, for example, a collection of essays edited by John H. Jameson Jr., *The Reconstructed Past: Reconstructions in the Public Interpretation of Archaeology and History* (2004) and in an article by Barbara Burlison Mooney, "Lincoln's New Salem: Or, the Trigonometric Theorem of Vernacular Restoration," in *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 11 (2004), to which Mazrim contributed. *The Sangamo Frontier*, along with Jameson's and Mooney's studies, and other studies like them, could lead readers to conclude that all preservationists lack integrity and ethics. If such resignation surfaces, keep reading Mazrim. He concludes with the excavations he conducted in Peoria during 2001 when a small post-in-earth French dwelling was discovered. "The local citizenry were elated with the overdue appearance of their French history in the ground. There was never any question that the village had been here, but that unassuming impression in the subsoil gave the stories an inescapable and haunting authenticity" (324). Such finds also indicate that the past can be buried, literally and figuratively, but with patience, planning, integrity, and persistence, that past can be recovered and its meaning taken into account.

Inkpaduta: Dakota Leader, by Paul N. Beck. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008. xx, 188 pp. Maps, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$24.95 cloth.

Reviewer William E. Lass is professor emeritus of history at Minnesota State University, Mankato. His most recent book is *Navigating the Missouri: Steamboating on Nature's Highway, 1819–1935* (2008). He has also written about interactions between Indians and whites on Minnesota's frontier.

Inkpaduta, a Wahpekute Dakota Indian chief, is remembered in Iowa history as the perpetrator of the so-called Spirit Lake Massacre. In March 1857 his small band of about a dozen warriors murdered 32 settlers in Dickinson County's lake region. Most of the killings occurred between the east and west Okoboji lakes, but only Spirit Lake to their north appeared by name on Joseph N. Nicollet's widely used map, *Hydrographical Basin of the Upper Mississippi River* (1843). Consequently, Iowa's greatest Indian-white conflict was identified with the area's best known landmark.

Although he had a relatively long life (ca. 1805–ca. 1879), Inkpaduta's fame is derived primarily from the Spirit Lake incident and its aftermath. As Beck explains, most of the extant information about Inkpaduta is for the period from 1854 (when he became band chief) to

1857. Scant information on his earlier life has established that he was the son of a chief and that for reasons that are not altogether clear was estranged after about 1840 from the main Wahpekute villages in Minnesota. Historians have usually portrayed Inkpaduta as an outlaw or renegade, but Beck insists that his exile was voluntary. Because he lived apart from his Minnesota kinsmen, Inkpaduta did not participate in the 1851 Treaty of Mendota under which the Wahpekute and the affiliated Mdewakanton ceded their Iowa and Minnesota lands.

Inkpaduta's life as a nomadic hunter in northwestern Iowa and adjacent parts of present-day Minnesota and South Dakota was increasingly complicated by diminishing wildlife, sometimes strained relations with incoming white settlers and the long, harsh winter of 1856–57. Unlike earlier historians, such as Doane Robinson, who portrayed Inkpaduta as a brutal savage in his *History of the Dakota or Sioux Indians* (1904), Beck sees him as a leader who cared deeply about his followers and in a fit of anger took out his frustrations on the Iowa settlers when his band faced imminent starvation.

News of the Iowa killings sent shock waves throughout the Upper Mississippi region. Fear-mongering frontier newspaper editors, generally intent on the removal of all Indians, not only demonized Inkpaduta as the quintessential savage, but also blamed him for subsequent random Indian violence throughout the northern plains region. Although intended as criticism, the reckless spreading of every rumor had the effect of elevating Inkpaduta's stature among both whites and Indians. Beck's coverage of the newspapers' creation of a symbolic Inkpaduta is excellent, but much of the spadework on this aspect was done originally by Mary Hawker Bakeman in *Legends, Letters, and Lies: Readings about Inkpaduta and the Spirit Lake Massacre* (2001).

Unlike Robinson and Maxwell Van Nuys (in *Inkpaduta—The Scarlet Point: Terror of the Dakota Frontier and Secret Hero of the Sioux* [1998]), Beck concludes that Inkpaduta was not a significant leader during the U.S. army's Dakota Territory campaigns in 1863–64 or at the Battle of the Little Big Horn in 1876. Nonetheless, he believes that Inkpaduta was "a great leader" (xi) because of his earlier exploits.

Beck's depiction of Inkpaduta as an Indian patriot because of his persistent adherence to traditionalism is a revisionist interpretation first suggested by Peggy Larson in her master's thesis, "Inkpaduta—Renegade Sioux" (Mankato State College, 1969). There is much wisdom to the oft-repeated observation that "each generation rewrites its history." Obviously, the interpretation of the past is influenced by the attitudes and perceptions of any given time. Beck has the luxury of approaching Inkpaduta as an academic subject. By contrast, Abbie

Gardner Sharp, a survivor of the Spirit Lake Massacre and author of *History of the Spirit Lake Massacre and Captivity of Miss Abbie Gardner* (1885) saw him in a considerably different light.

Overall, Beck's heavily documented book is a considerable improvement over Van Nuys's amateurish biography of the chief. However, it is marred by a number of factual mistakes, typographical errors, and some imprecise citations. For example, the Fort Des Moines that immediately preceded Fort Dodge in the 1840s was located not in "eastern Iowa" (36) but at the later site of the state capital in central Iowa. Beck's claim that the Dakota reservations in Minnesota were surrounded by "towns and farms" (55) is only a supposition. The numerous typographical errors probably resulted from careless proof-reading. Consequently, Mary Hawker Bakeman appears as Mary Hawler Bakeman and her publisher as Genealogical Boxes rather than the correct Genealogical Books.

Time will tell if this book is the last word on Inkpaduta. As Beck aptly observes, "because of the lack of sources and documentation, Inkpaduta will likely always remain something of a mystery" (xii).

From Pioneering to Persevering: Family Farming in Indiana to 1880, by Paul Salstrom. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2007. xii, 208 pp. Maps, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$23.95 paper.

Reviewer Frank Yoder is an academic advisor at the University of Iowa who also teaches the Iowa history course at the university. His dissertation (University of Chicago, 1999) was "A Rural Kaleidoscope: Property, Mobility, and Ethnic Diversity in the Middle West."

In the preface to this brief history of early Indiana agriculture and family farming, Paul Salstrom makes reference to "easy-entry family farming," which he believes characterized the first years of frontier farm settlement by whites in Indiana. This statement could lead readers to believe they will be getting a narrow slice of Indiana rural history that deals only with family social systems along with a sprinkling of economics. Instead, Salstrom delivers a vast amount of information and analysis in a compact, well-written look at Indiana during the years of Native American agriculture and the transition to a white-dominated agriculture.

Generic white settlement is not at the heart of this story. Salstrom argues that British, American, and northern European settlers brought a distinctive culture to frontier Indiana. It was a culture marked by individualism, violence, private ownership, and antagonism toward Native Americans. This new outlook marked a sharp departure from that of earlier French and Native American settlements.

The shift was not sudden; Native Americans had felt the influence of Europeans and Americans for some time. Steel tools changed American Indian life from a nomadic existence to a more settled, agricultural life style. As Native Americans became enmeshed in the French fur trading system, they increasingly relied on markets and capital for their existence. Ultimately, Native Americans were overrun by whites who settled the land and began the intensive agriculture that continues today.

Farm families on the Indiana frontier benefited from a convergence of transportation developments that created market conditions beneficial to farmers. By 1850, river flatboats, canals, and railroads were competing to transport farm goods: farmers could select among markets as diverse as New Orleans, New York, or Chicago; they could barter locally; or they could preserve farm products for their own consumption. For several decades they prospered in this favorable environment.

Salstrom shows that change was due to factors that were unpredictable and often dramatic. For example, he describes the rapid shift to dairy farming and fresh milk production in northwest Indiana because of Chicago's explosive growth after 1850. When frontier farm families were able to react to these changes, they often did very well with their flexible system of bartering, self-sufficiency, and producing for the market.

National events such as the Civil War spurred crop and livestock production as demand increased after 1860. New technologies such as reapers, steel plows, and threshing machines changed the dynamics of the economy and of local communities. Salstrom is at his best as he describes the connections between local Indiana farmers and distant markets and the ways farmers negotiated among their options.

At the heart of this study is the fate of the family farm. Salstrom argues that "family farm life was . . . prolonged by inventors' failure to devise an efficient corn picker" (106). But that reprieve was only temporary because technology was reducing labor requirements long before the mechanical corn picker appeared. Log clearing parties and other tasks that required farmers to share labor and work together were disappearing by the end of the nineteenth century. The celebrated threshing ring held on a bit longer, but its days were also numbered.

Salstrom concludes with a passionate plea for the family farm, noting that "the past few decades have made ever clearer the reasons why traditional family farming is in a tailspin" (123). He argues that the decline of family farms since 1900 has been harmful for society as a whole. There is no question that the number of farms has fallen, but it is just as clear that even today the remaining farms continue to be

owned and operated mostly by families. They may not look like the family farms of the nineteenth century, but ownership and day-to-day operations of most midwestern farms are still in the hands of families. Decrying the loss of the family farm is an understandable sentiment, but it is not clear why family farms deserve this attention while the disappearance of other family enterprises, such as the local hardware, drug, and grocery store, is ignored.

This work stands alongside that of scholars such as John Mack Faragher who have characterized the early frontier as a time of neighborly assistance, bartering, self-sufficiency, and wholesome communities. As market forces gathered and grew in strength, these idyllic rural communities gave way to agricultural capitalism that marked the end of America's best hope. There is little doubt that market forces did grow and did change the nature of farm communities. But one wonders whether those living through the early settlement years would have described their existence as scholars such as Salstrom have described it. Even Salstrom notes the drudgery of the hard work, the dangers families faced, and the meager existence of many families in those early years.

Arguments over Salstrom's interpretation should not detract from the value of this work. It is a piece of solid research, careful analysis, and rich detail. It offers more substance and complexity than many works of twice the length. Salstrom's efficient style packs a tremendous amount of information into a small number of pages. He negotiates smoothly between local history and broader economic and political history and sets individual farm families within the larger national and international context. This book will be of lasting value to scholars interested in the frontier, the Midwest, and agriculture change.

More Than a Contest Between Armies: Essays on the Civil War Era, edited by James Marten and A. Kristen Foster. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2008. xii, 309 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. \$35.00 cloth.

Reviewer William B. Feis is professor of history at Buena Vista University. He is the author of *Grant's Secret Service: The Intelligence War from Belmont to Appomattox* (2002).

Without doubt, the Frank L. Klement Lectures at Marquette University have been a seedbed of new and alternative thinking about all aspects of the Civil War. Named for Professor Frank L. Klement, arguably one of the more innovative historians of the war, the lecture series has become a forum for the best and the brightest in the field to float alternative approaches, new lines of questioning, differing perspectives, and

penetrating reassessments of the conflict. The 12 essays in *More Than a Contest Between Armies* were originally presented as Klement Lectures by scholars even those with only a passing interest in the Civil War will recognize as marquee players in a field not short on talent. Moreover, many of the lectures have become important points of departure for how we view the war in several different contexts.

Editors James Marten and A. Kristen Foster provide an informative and sympathetic overview of the iconoclastic Frank Klement's career as a revisionist, particularly with regard to Abraham Lincoln's abuse of civil liberties during the war. The editors also detail the inception of the lecture series as a forum for "exploring un- or under-examined events, people, and points of view" (xi). The essays in this volume meet this goal admirably as they touch on nearly every new theme to emerge in Civil War studies over the past two decades.

The first essay by Edward L. Ayers examines how the World Wide Web has significantly enlarged both the scope and depth of study of the war, especially on the regional and local level. Ayers, the mastermind behind the much praised Valley of the Shadow Project, reveals that new and imaginative approaches to examining the war coupled with the new technology of The Information Age can produce striking results that, in turn, will reach a much wider audience on the information highway.

David W. Blight, a pioneer in the study of the "remembered war," examines Frederick Douglass's efforts to forge a national memory of Abraham Lincoln as the emancipator and savior of the nation that honored the man and the cause but also served Douglass's larger political purposes. Other contributors also tackle the fascinating topic of the "remembered war," including Joan Waugh's reassessment of Grant's memoirs, J. Matthew Gallman's examination of civilian memories of the war, and Gary Gallagher's classic piece on how Jubal Early and other "Lost Cause" revisionists traded swords for pens and won the postbellum "history war."

Also in the volume, Robert Johannsen examines the arguments of Henry Tuckerman, a mid-nineteenth-century writer and intellectual, on the cause of the Civil War and the war's ultimate meaning; George Rable uses the disastrous Federal campaign against Fredericksburg in 1862 to show how poor journalism affected the home front; the late John Y. Simon compares the leadership of U. S. Grant and Henry Halleck to determine why the former excelled in command while the latter never got off the ground; and Lesley Gordon adds to a robust modern discussion of how common soldiers defined bravery and cowardice. Moving away from the battlefield, Catherine Clinton ex-

pands our understanding of the Confederacy's "public women"; Mark Neely follows Klement's footsteps, although he focuses on Jefferson Davis and civil liberties in the Confederacy; and William Blair addresses the heated postwar discussion over treason and punishment for former Confederates.

Altogether, this volume shows that revisionism of this sort not only adds much to our understanding of the American past but also provides a richly rewarding lens through which to view human beings in the crucible of war. The disparate nature of some essay collections makes it difficult to find and assess common themes. However, though fundamentally different in many ways, the essays in this volume achieve a certain harmony by concentrating on new ways of thinking about well-worn topics and on explorations into new people, events, and ideas. This volume should find its way into the personal libraries of anyone with a serious interest in the Civil War.

Women on the Civil War Battlefield, by Richard H. Hall. Modern War Studies. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006. x, 397 pp. Illustrations, appendixes, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95 cloth.

Reviewer LeeAnn Whites is professor of history at the University of Missouri-Columbia. She is the author of *Gender Matters: Civil War, Reconstruction, and the Making of the New South* (2005).

In *Women on the Civil War Battlefield*, Richard H. Hall gives readers a wide-ranging overview of the various ways women participated directly in military aspects of the Civil War. He divides his initial chapters by the form of participation, and he includes discussions of women who were variously Daughters of the Regiment, vivandières, nurses, cross dressers, women cross dressers in the cavalry, and women who served as spies, scouts, and saboteurs. He also includes chapters that focus on women who ended up in prison in connection with their military service and African American women who served, as well as a chapter in which he takes on a dozen cases of women who are thought to have served in the military, but who were actually postwar fakes or just urban legends. In the last chapter and also in a lengthy appendix, the text becomes a list of short biographies, totaling, in the case of the appendix, more than 400 documented cases of women who served during the Civil War. In compiling so much basic information about women who served, Hall has done a useful service for other historical researchers. His work can be compared in this regard to the recently published book by Thomas Lowry, *Confederate Heroines: 120 Southern Women Convicted by Union Military Justice* (2006), which also provides

a useful service to researchers by briefly describing the cases of many women who appeared before U.S. military justice tribunals in the course of the Civil War.

By diligently compiling the cases of so many women, Hall has certainly substantiated one of his central claims: that a substantial number of women served in the Civil War, and that while their gender in some ways modified where or how they might serve, it certainly did not stop them from serving ably. In passing, Hall also presents some interesting issues that are worth further development. For example, he observes that while women who cross dressed as soldiers were initially lauded in the press, by the end of the war such women were much more likely to be presented as being “coarse” and acting in a fashion undignified for a woman. He also argues that women who served represented a wide range of the class spectrum, while at the same time tending to serve in different capacities based on their class backgrounds. Further examination of either of these issues would give more chronological depth and social structural context to our understanding of why these women insisted on serving their country as they did.

Some historians may take issue with Hall’s claim that military service as a nurse, a spy, or even as a drummer boy, made these women into soldiers like any other. Some may also take issue with Hall’s almost total neglect of antebellum passing women as a core group and key motivation behind women’s service in the war. Finally, some may find his thin interpretation of the meaning of women’s service to be basically derivative of works already published on the subject, such as Blanton and Cook’s *They Fought Like Demons: Women Soldiers in the Civil War* (2002) or Elizabeth Leonard’s *All the Daring of the Soldier: Women of the Civil War Armies* (1999).

At the end of the book, Hall calls for any researchers or descendants of the women he discusses to come forth with further information or clarification about them. It still remains a puzzle why these women were so adamant about their desire to serve, many of them as men, while the overwhelming majority of women were content to remain, even in the gender-shattering context of the Civil War, “the sex.”

Vanishing Footprints: The Twenty-second Iowa Volunteer Infantry in the Civil War, by Samuel D. Pryce; edited by Jeffrey C. Burden. Iowa City: Camp Pope Bookshop, 2008. xvii, 249 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, appendix, bibliography, index. \$18.95 paper.

Reviewer Timothy B. Smith is lecturer of history at the University of Tennessee at Martin. He has written extensively, including two articles in this journal, about national Civil War military parks.

Few Civil War units can offer a travel log equal to that of the soldiers of the Twenty-second Iowa Infantry, so it is fitting that their actions are finally enumerated on paper. Samuel D. Pryce, author of *Vanishing Footprints*, served in the regiment, and the Twenty-second Iowa Regimental Association veterans even voted his book to be their official record. The regiment began its service in Missouri before serving in the Vicksburg Campaign and later in Louisiana and then in Virginia in the Shenandoah Valley. Despite a captivating story and the veterans' endorsement, Pryce's manuscript was never published, possibly because it was 827 pages long, much of it unrelated to the war. Fortunately, editor Jeffrey C. Burden has cut away all the fluff and produced a concise and important history of the regiment.

Vanishing Footprints is a combination of published memoir and regimental history. As in the case of almost all postwar memoirs, however, the reader must remember that the work was written after the fact and can be tinged with the worldview of the writer. Nonetheless, Civil War historians and buffs in general, as well as Iowans in particular, will be pleased with this handsome publication. The volume should be especially interesting to Johnson County Iowans, as seven of the ten companies in the regiment hailed from that locale.

The Battle of Shiloh and the Organizations Engaged, by David W. Reed with a new introduction by Timothy B. Smith. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2008. xxvii, 122 pp. Illustrations, maps (PDF files on CD-ROM), notes, table, index. \$33.00 cloth.

Reviewer Brian K. McCutchen began his National Park Service career as a ranger/historian at Shiloh and now serves as National Park Superintendent of the Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site, Stanton, North Dakota.

Colonel David W. Reed — familiar to Iowa Civil War historians as distinguished veteran of the 12th Iowa Volunteer Infantry Regiment, and widely regarded as “father” of the Shiloh National Military Park — published *The Battle of Shiloh and the Organizations Engaged* in 1902. This small but meticulous book — constructed entirely from official records, veteran input, and a vivid familiarity with the cultural landscape of the period — quickly became the “bible” of the 1862 battle. Subsequent editions, with revisions, followed in 1909 and 1913.

The first major book about Shiloh, Reed's account served as the cornerstone for all Shiloh interpretation for almost 70 years. Although generally balanced, *The Battle of Shiloh* is not entirely without romanticism and lore. Folklore such as the “Sunken Road,” the “Hornets Nest,” and the “Bloody Pond,” as well as the idolization of General

Benjamin Prentiss as hero of the Hornets Nest all were proliferated by Reed and his contemporaries.

Timothy Smith should be lauded for bringing about the republication of this history. His introduction provides an enlightening account of noted Iowan David W. Reed, his involvement with the battle, and his invaluable direction in the battlefield's preservation, commemoration, and long-term interpretation. Smith's inclusion (PDF files on CD-ROM) of the four large maps that accompanied the original publication is of great benefit.

For the Shiloh researcher looking for an account of the battle from the earliest of testimonials and from the veteran perspective, *The Battle of Shiloh and Organizations Engaged* should be a staple of reference.

Memory and Myth: The Civil War in Fiction and Film from Uncle Tom's Cabin to Cold Mountain, edited by David B. Sachsman, S. Kittrell Rushing, and Roy Morris Jr. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2007. xiii, 307 pp. Notes, index. \$62.95 cloth, \$29.95 paper.

Reviewer Samuel Graber is Lilly Fellow and lecturer in the humanities at Valparaiso University. His dissertation (University of Iowa, 2008) is "Twice-Divided Nation: The Civil War and National Memory in the Transatlantic World."

Every April throngs of Iowans explore the Civil War era at the festivities surrounding Keokuk's Battle of Pea Ridge Reenactment, where audiences listen to speeches by impersonators, watch "living historians" demonstrate the intricacies of Civil War medicine, and enjoy a dramatic reenactment staged on land no real Civil War battle ever touched. The popularity of such events testifies to the intensity and variety of Civil War memory. In a state with no major battle site, it seems one can still be invented.

Iowa readers will find similarly intriguing reenactments of the war in *Memory and Myth*, a wide-ranging collection of 25 short essays culled from more than a decade's worth of conference papers. The pieces are organized into sections on antebellum writers and slavery, the war years and their aftermath, modern writers' responses to the war, and cinematic and televised representations. The essays locate myths and memories of the war within histories, novels, newspapers, autobiographies, and film. Although somewhat uneven in quality, they display an intellectual flexibility befitting a diverse authorship that includes media scholars, English professors, historians, and even poets.

In its scope and loose organization, *Memory and Myth* reflects the complexity that makes Civil War memory both beguiling and frustrating. The war seems to be remembered everywhere in American

culture — from F. Scott Fitzgerald’s fiction to PBS’s pledge drives — but systematic explanations of why the war has been remembered in such peculiar ways are difficult to provide through the medium of a short essay. Not surprisingly, *Memory and Myth’s* selections tend to be descriptive, their arguments sketched rather than fully developed. The sampling nevertheless conveys a sense of the rich historical ground beneath mnemonic landmarks such as *Gone with the Wind*, *The Red Badge of Courage*, *Birth of a Nation*, and *Roots*. Such towering works have come to stand for the war era in the popular imagination, but this collection highlights their connections to a surprisingly wide range of lesser-known texts and contexts. In the literary realm, the essays recover a vibrant antislavery publishing market behind the success of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, reexamine overlooked Civil War writers William Gilmore Simms and Ben Wood, and revisit neglected novels such as Henry Adams’s *Democracy* and Upton Sinclair’s *Manassas*. Roy Morris Jr. offers incisive readings of Ambrose Bierce and Stephen Crane. The final section on films and especially television productions provides some of the collection’s liveliest pieces, and should appeal to Iowans who recall the televised versions of *Gone with the Wind*, *Roots*, or Ken Burns’s PBS documentary, *The Civil War*, as formative cultural events.

Indeed, the collection’s primary value lies in its capacity to defamiliarize such familiar portraits of the Civil War era in interesting ways. The war’s cultural representation, these scholars suggest, was more complicated than we suppose and arose from unacknowledged sources. The Uncle Tom, Scarlett O’Hara, and Kunta Kinte we think we remember turn out to be far more complicated characters in their original settings. Under careful scrutiny such figures bear witness, not just to slavery and war, but to the complex and largely forgotten cultural forces at work in their own creation, popular reception, and mythic appropriation.

Less apparent from this collection is why such historical complexity so quickly gives way to the more simplistic explanations and interpretations that American popular culture favors. Encountering so many excavated facts and fictions, readers likely will wonder why these events and stories were buried, why others were preserved, and why still others were radically transformed to make them palatable and relevant to contemporary audiences. Many of *Memory and Myth’s* essays seem willing to bypass such challenging questions, to take them up in passing, or to gloss them in a final paragraph. The most impressive essays, however, manage to address issues of collective memory construction and myth-making in the few pages allotted. William Huntzicker’s concise and revealing exploration of the dubious factuality of

Alex Haley's *Roots*, and the combined efforts of Robert Blakeslee Gilpin, Edward J. Blum, and Sarah Hardin Blum to dissect Robert Penn Warren's interrogation of the John Brown myth all succeed admirably in this regard.

Perhaps Iowa's fading historical connection to John Brown or other war-era notables will make such discussions more relevant to those interested in Iowa history. More likely, Iowa's broader participation in the national obsession with the Civil War—on display every summer in Keokuk's reenactment of a battle the state never actually staged—ensure that *Myth and Memory* will find as many interested readers in Iowa as it will elsewhere.

Eber: Pioneer in Iowa, 1854–1875, by Ronald H. Stone. Iowa City: Press of the Camp Pope Bookshop, 2008. xii, 235 pp. Illustrations, map, notes, index. \$25.00 paper.

Reviewer Douglas Firth Anderson is professor of history at Northwestern College, Orange City, Iowa. His research, writing, and teaching focus on the history of the American West.

Eber Stone (d. 1875) was a pioneer settler of Humboldt County. A native of western New York, he brought with him experience as a teacher and school superintendent as well as commitments to "scientific" agriculture, temperance, antislavery, and nondenominational Protestantism. Between his arrival in 1854 and his death 21 years later from typhoid, he led in the development of Humboldt's public school system and its agricultural society. Stone made annual reports to the Iowa Agricultural Society beginning in 1864, and he also wrote essays on education and Humboldt County. His publications, together with his local office holding (secretary of the Humboldt County Agricultural Society, chair of the Board of County Supervisors, county superintendent of schools), provide ample evidence of his role as an articulate spokesperson for Humboldt's "free government" (Republican), agricultural potential, and aspirations for "culture and refinement" (198).

Ronald H. Stone — a great-grandson of Eber — has sought to construct a book that goes beyond a genealogy of interest only to family members and a local history that provides documents and data uncritically and with little historical context. Yet, what the great-grandson said of his forebear ironically also applies to him: "His reach exceeded his grasp" (182). Compared to, say, Judy Nolte Lensink's study of Emily Hawley Gillespie in "A Secret to Be Buried" or Thomas J. Morain's study of Jefferson, Iowa, in *Prairie Grass Roots*, Ronald Stone's

book is less a critical narrative than a gathering of historical data about an individual and his local social context.

The book begins with an introduction that provides background on Stone; thereafter, the chapters are organized by year. Curiously, there is no discussion of when Eber was born. Most of the documents presented fall into two groups: Eber's boosterish reports, and letters from relatives outside of Iowa. Background is provided, but analysis is uneven, at best. At times, it is not clear what the connection is between the historical background provided and Eber's life and thought. Moreover, the author's familiarity with Iowa, frontier, and American Indian historiography is thin and outdated (there is no bibliography). Among other things, this leads to an unreliable summary of Inkpaduta and the Spirit Lake Massacre, for which MacKinlay Kantor's 1961 novel *Spirit Lake* is cited as "the most detailed" historical account (66).

The author seems to assume that Eber Stone's historical significance — "one pioneer as presented in documents" (xi) — can be taken for granted. Historians, however, must be advocates for the dead; that is, a case must be made for historical significance by constructing narratives that revivify in some fashion the elusive past. Neither Eber Stone nor early Humboldt County society and culture come to life in this book. Nevertheless, an index makes this volume of some reference value for Humboldt County history.

Norwegians on the Prairie: Ethnicity and the Development of the Country Town, by Odd S. Lovoll. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press in cooperation with the Norwegian-American Historical Association, 2006. xvii, 321 pp. Maps, chart, tables, illustrations, notes, index. \$32.95 cloth.

Reviewer Dag Blanck is director of the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center at Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois, and also teaches at Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden. He has written extensively about Scandinavian immigrants to the United States.

For many years, Odd Lovoll has been the leading historian of Norwegian American history. His magisterial two-volume set, *The Promise of America: A History of the Norwegian-American People* (1984; rev. ed., 1999) and *The Promise Fulfilled: A Portrait of Norwegian Americans Today* (1998), is a unique history of a European immigrant group in that it focuses not only on the history of Norwegian immigration to the United States during the classic immigration era in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but also deals with subsequent developments in the Norwegian American community until the end of the twentieth century.

Lovoll's latest book, *Norwegians on the Prairie*, also breaks new ground in the field of Norwegian and Scandinavian American history in its focus on immigrant experiences in small urban communities in western Minnesota. Norwegian Americans were one of the least urbanized immigrant groups in the United States by the end of the immigration era in 1920, as a majority of both first- and second-generation Norwegian Americans lived in rural areas at that time. A majority of Swedish and German Americans, in contrast, had become urbanites by that time. Other scholars have recognized this "basic rural orientation" of Norwegian Americans, as Lovoll calls it, but his focus on the role of small towns and their interplay with the surrounding farming areas adds significantly to our understanding of this important aspect of Norwegian American history.

Three small towns in western Minnesota form the nucleus of Lovoll's discussion: Benson in Swift County, Starbuck in Pope County, and Madison in Lac qui Parle County. They were all towns (or villages) where Norwegian Americans of the first and second generations dominated among the immigrant population, ranging from 43 to 66 percent in 1900. In all three localities, Swedes formed a distant second-largest group, with a scattering of Irish, German, British, Danish, and Canadian immigrants completing the ethnic picture.

Lovoll provides an in-depth social and demographic analysis of these towns based on a variety of sources, such as census and church records, local newspapers, official county records, and interviews. The discussion of Benson is particularly thorough. Lovoll recreates the history of this small village, the development of which was closely tied to the coming of the railroad in 1870. Its population grew quickly but leveled off and held steady between 2,000 and 3,000 during the first half of the twentieth century. Benson was heavily shaped by immigration, with a large number of immigrants — primarily Norwegians, followed by Swedes and Irish.

In terms of social relations in the village, Lovoll shows that a quarter of the village's residents were general laborers in 1880. A relatively low share of the Norwegian Americans were professionally trained, a situation that prevailed over the years to come. Yankees dominated in those categories. However, Lovoll very interestingly shows that a working-class mentality or solidarity was much less noticeable in Benson than in Norwegian settlements in larger urban areas. The size of the community, he argues, explains this difference, as it also influenced the degree to which ethnic and religious identities were factors of mobilization.

Religious strife has always been an important part of Norwegian American history. Norwegians in America started no fewer than 14

different Lutheran church bodies or synods between 1846 and 1900. The two Norwegian American Lutheran churches in Benson represented different approaches among Norwegian Lutherans in the United States. Lovoll's detailed analysis of the history of the two congregations does much to shed light on a complicated process.

The book's two final chapters provide an interesting and nuanced discussion of the ways Norwegian Americans in Benson, Starbuck, and Madison became part of what Lovoll calls "the American matrix." Here, the level of analysis shifts from the ethnic community to American society at large, and the discussions deal with the ways Norwegians participated in the educational, political, and cultural life of their communities. The section on Norwegian Americans and politics provides a particularly interesting discussion. Lovoll's treatment of the various reform movements, such as Populism, the Nonpartisan League, and temperance, helps to further our understanding of these complex issues. The final chapter, "The Persistence of Ethnicity," brings the story up to the present time. As in his earlier work on contemporary patterns of Norwegian American ethnicity, Lovoll shows how a sense of "Norwegianness" has survived up until the present time, but also how its development has followed its own, at times, quite particular trajectory.

In conclusion, Odd Lovoll has written a highly interesting and readable book on a dimension of Norwegian American history that so far has gone unexplored. It is recommended for anyone interested in Norwegian American history, American immigration history in general, or the history of the upper Midwest.

Plain Diversity: Amish Cultures and Identities, by Steven M. Nolt and Thomas J. Meyers. Young Center Books in Anabaptist and Pietist Studies. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007. x, 241 pp. Tables, maps, illustrations, appendix, references, index. \$48.00 cloth.

Reviewer Beth E. Graybill is director of the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society. Her recently completed Ph.D. dissertation is "Amish Women, Business Sense: Old Order Women Entrepreneurs in the Lancaster County [Pennsylvania] Tourist Marketplace."

Two respected scholars of the Amish have united to explore the diversity of Amish experience through the lens of the 20 distinct Amish settlements in Indiana. Nolt, a historian, and Meyers, a sociologist, base their study on five years of interviews, fieldwork, and archival research. They attempt to paint a larger picture of the Amish that will be applicable beyond their state's borders by exploring three markers of difference: ethnicity (Swiss versus Pennsylvania German dialect and folk-

ways), differing patterns of migration, and differing *Ordnungs*. Nolt and Myers define *Ordnung* as “the accumulated traditional wisdom about the proper ordering of life,” and include both “general principles, such as assuming a humble demeanor, as well as specific directives, such as the dimensions of a woman’s bonnet” (8). Some of their general interpretive frameworks have broader application, but others, such as Swiss ethnicity, are unique to the Indiana or Ohio Amish scene, with less relevance for those of us studying Amish in other parts of the country where the Pennsylvania German stream predominates.

Indiana is home to the third-largest population of Old Order Amish, following Ohio and Pennsylvania. The eastern Iowa Amish settlement in Johnson and Washington counties (around Kalona), dates to 1846, about the same time as the Indiana Amish settlements. Amish migrants from Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Ohio chose land near Kalona because of its rich farming potential. For many years, the Kalona settlement was the largest settlement west of the Mississippi River. Today, the Amish population in Missouri (just under 10,000) is higher than Iowa’s total Amish population (6,210), though it is dispersed in smaller, more numerous settlements.

Nolt and Myers identify four distinct Amish migration patterns that relate to Amish in Iowa as well as to the Indiana Amish they studied: (1) migration during the 1840s from other parts of the eastern United States to Indiana and parts west (including Iowa); (2) 1840s immigration of Amish directly to Indiana from Europe (this is the Swiss influence, largely limited to Amish in Indiana and Ohio); (3) the spawning of “offshoot” or “daughter” communities (for example, the Amish settlement in Iowa’s Buchanan County in 1914 was spawned by the Kalona settlement); and (4) present-day migration as a result of rising land prices and demographic pressures in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and New York (newer small settlements in other parts of Iowa, such as Pulaski, and in Missouri would be examples of this).

Scholars more familiar with the Iowa Amish than I will need to assess to what degree Nolt and Meyers’s findings apply to Amish in Iowa. In his book, *The Amish on the Iowa Prairie, 1840 to 1910* (2000), Steven Reschly has noted that Iowa’s Amish consisted of transplants from farms in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Maryland, and Ontario, practicing self-sufficient subsistence farming balanced with commodity market participation. “Individuals constantly joined the community and left the community as new migrants arrived from the East and others left to establish more settlements farther West” (32–33).

Nolt and Myers mention the “paradoxical relationship between the farming ideal and the practical possibility of farming” (48), given

limited farmland and Amish population growth. To what extent is cottage industry and small business enterprise (as in the Lancaster, Pennsylvania, settlement and its sister communities in Indiana) and/or factory work (as in northern Indiana) common among Iowa Amish? Is their *Ordnung* high or low (accepting of a greater or lesser degree of interaction with the outside world)? In their final chapter Nolt and Meyers attempt to map some of these variations of an Amish worldview along their axis of communal versus individual orientation (examples given relate to use of the ban and visits to town) and traditional versus rational authority (examples given include use of telephones and modern medicine).

To their credit, Nolt and Meyers do a good job of gendering the Amish, specifying Amish men when speaking of Amish employment in Indiana trailer factories (as well as noting that occasionally young Amish women are employed in office work in such factories), and using “the Amish” only when speaking about beliefs presumably shared by men and women in the community. However, as in much modern scholarship on the Amish, gender and women’s voices are largely obscured.

Readers of this journal will want to take note of the new edition of *A Peculiar People: Iowa’s Old Order Amish*, by Elmer Schwieder and Dorothy Schwieder, newly available from the University of Iowa Press in spring 2009, which addresses the Amish in Iowa more specifically.

Pot Roast, Politics, and Ants in the Pantry: Missouri’s Cookbook Heritage, by Carol Fisher and John Fisher. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2008. x, 234 pp. Illustrations, notes, appendix (recipes), bibliography, index. \$19.95 paper.

Reviewer Jill M. Nussel is visiting assistant professor of history at Indiana University–Purdue University Fort Wayne. Her research and writing have focused on using cookbooks to shed light on immigrants and their communities.

Most self-appointed “foodies” might say that the most important culinary advancement from Missouri was Irma Rombauer’s influential treatise *The Joy of Cooking*, but many may be surprised to know that this beloved cookbook was originally self-published in 1931. That is just one of the many surprises in Carol Fisher and John Fisher’s examination of Missouri’s rich culinary history. The study of American foodways is a growing avenue of inquiry in the academy; for everyone else, there’s a love of food. In this case the Fishers have made their case that Missouri cookbooks play a vital role in understanding the rich and varied textures of the state.

As the Fishers demonstrate, cookbooks are more than just a jumble of recipes. On closer inspection, they provide a barometer into a community based on race, religion, class, or gender. The Fishers invite readers to enter the kitchens of compilers and authors to discover how housewives actually cooked, found remedies for ailments of all kinds, and rid their homes of ants in the pantry. These cookbooks reflect the solid values of Missouri and the Midwest — recipes that are often billed as economical, practical, tried and true, and the very best.

The Fishers have organized *Pot Roast, Politics, and Ants in the Pantry* effectively, dividing the chapters by type of cookbook examined in that chapter: early cookbooks, nineteenth-century publications, and community, ethnic, historical, individually authored, festival, product-sponsored, restaurant, and political cookbooks. The book ends with a discussion of useful advice, selected recipes, and the Fishers' final perspective. To say that this book examines a representative sampling of culinary works is an understatement. In fact, the 16-page bibliography alone is worth the price of the book. In addition to *The Joy of Cooking*, the Fishers have examined nearly 200 cookbooks, 44 Web sites, more than two dozen newspapers and cookbook bibliographies, as well as several academic libraries and historical societies. Readers are taken to kitchens, restaurants, and church suppers of America's heartland.

One cannot help but feel sorry for the young Julia Hancock, newly married to Captain William Clark, governor of the Missouri Territory. In 1808 the young bride came from a Virginia planter family and was thrust into life on the frontier. Readers find that many of the handwritten "receipts" in her journal may have actually been written by Captain Clark himself. Why did Clark take such an interest in his wife's domestic activity? We may never be sure of the answer, but interspersed with the receipts is an account of the foodstuffs and spices and even fashions available to St. Louis cooks of the early nineteenth century, adding to our understanding of the domestic life of the period.

Midwestern readers will appreciate the Fishers' folksy descriptions of immigrant life on the frontier, including tales of farming, hog butchering, and life on the railroads. Many immigrant groups are discussed, but the German influence on Missouri is particularly notable. If I have one criticism of this book, it is the short shrift given to Missouri's African American heritage, which is limited to a few paragraphs in the historical section. At the very least, there should have been a discussion of why there are so few cookbooks representing the black community. That small criticism aside, the Fishers provide a valuable starting point for continued analysis into the historical narrative of the Midwest at one of its most fundamental levels — the cookbook.

Uncle Henry Wallace: Letters to Farm Families, edited by Zachary Michael Jack. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2008. xviii, 199 pp. Illustrations, notes. \$19.95 paper.

Reviewer Virginia Wadsley is an independent scholar and freelance writer in Des Moines. She has conducted research for the Wallace family, made presentations about their family history, and is working on a book on the work of Uncle Henry's wife and daughter with *Wallaces' Farmer*.

Fourth-generation Iowa farmer's son Zachary Michael Jack has republished open letters by Iowa agricultural editor Uncle Henry Wallace (1836–1916) that originally appeared in *Wallaces' Farmer* and then in book form by popular demand. Fascinated with Wallace's Victorian character development messages, which have "remained uncannily true" although "sometimes dated in their particulars" (xiv), Jack chose selections from *Uncle Henry's Letters to the Farm Boy* (1897), *Letters to the Farm Folk* (1915), and the three-volume *Uncle Henry's Own Story of His Life* (1917–1919), plus several memorial tributes and will excerpts. The edited arrangement moves from moral exhortation to "cautionary tales" and continues with expository advice. Jack's introductory material is the story of his own journey with Uncle Henry as well as a brief biography of the man he describes as "preacher, farmer, editor, philosopher, lecturer, counselor, friend, everyman" (1) and mistakenly calls the "scion," rather than forefather, of the "most famous farming family in American history" (xi).

Jack's purpose is neither biographical nor scholarly. Instead, the book is designed to complement Richard S. Kirkendall's *Uncle Henry: A Documentary Profile of the First Henry Wallace* (1993) and Russell Lord's colorful if not entirely accurate *The Wallaces of Iowa* (1947). Although the introductory setup perhaps relies too much on Lord and tends toward adulation rather than critical analysis, Jack rightly allows the letters themselves to reveal the soul of the "man of alluring and illuminating contradictions" (xv). Readers will be drawn into the Victorian ethos as the "hobbledehoy's" parents, chums, social life, brain food, and habits are discussed and then be led to contemplate twenty-first-century issues as "commercial morality" is criticized. This is a book for smiles and reflection with universal appeal.

The Life and Legacy of Frank Gotch: King of the Catch-as-Catch-Can Wrestlers, by Mike Chapman. Boulder, CO: Paladin Press, 2008. xi, 149 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography. \$19.95 paper.

Reviewer Randy Roberts is distinguished professor of history at Purdue University. His books include *Jack Dempsey, the Manassa Mauler* (1979); *Papa Jack:*

Jack Johnson and the Era of White Hopes (1983); and *Winning Is the Only Thing: Sports in America since 1945* (coauthor, 1989).

In an age before professional wrestling became a branch of acting, Frank Gotch was the master of the sport. Between 1908 and 1913 he ruled the professional sport as heavyweight champion. After winning the title in a two-hour marathon match against George Hackenschmidt, the reigning champion, Gotch became a sports celebrity. He was friends with former heavyweight boxing champion James J. Jeffries, twice visited President Theodore Roosevelt in the White House, and was courted by Iowa Republican politicians to run for governor. He toured the country in plays, flirted with a career in the movies, and thoroughly capitalized on his fame through the medium of advertising. After retiring from professional wrestling, he traveled with the Sells-Floto Circus offering \$250 to anyone who could last 15 minutes in the ring with him. He died in 1917 at the age of 39.

Gotch was one of Iowa's premier athletes. Born in Humboldt and raised on a farm, he developed tremendous body strength, but what really separated him from most other wrestlers was his interest in the science of the sport. As he mastered technique, he mastered opponents. His style was aggressive, occasionally dirty, and always relentless. His style and popularity did much to legitimize the sport. The singular tradition of wrestling in Iowa owes much to the career of Frank Gotch.

In his brief overview of Gotch's career, Mike Chapman provides the basic facts of the wrestler's life and tries to separate the legends from the realities. Certainly he demonstrates the crucial impact Gotch had on the sport of wrestling, and although he does not devote much space to the role the wrestler played in American culture, he does make it clear that it is a subject worth more study. In some ways, Gotch was as important as such boxers of the era as Jack Johnson, Jim Jefferies, and the young Jack Dempsey.

Mobilizing Minerva: American Women in the First World War, by Kimberly Jensen. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008. xvii, 244 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$65.00 cloth, \$30.00 paper.

Reviewer Kathleen Scott will receive her Ph.D. in American studies from The College of William and Mary in May 2009. In her dissertation she analyzes how dominant race, class, and gender ideologies inflected dietitians' quest for professionalization during World War I. She has also directed the Oral History Program at the Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation, Inc.

Kimberly Jensen's new book, *Mobilizing Minerva*, is an important contribution to the field of U.S. women's military history. Her analysis

indicates a maturation in the expanding literature on women and gender and war. Articulating women's wartime activism through the rubrics of professionalization, citizenship, and anti-violence activism during important transformations in American liberalism is an arduous task with no simple answers.

Mobilizing Minerva is structured around five fundamental ideas. First, Jensen holds that war, violence, and activism must be understood in a specific historical context. Second, she claims that three particular case studies — nurses, female physicians, and women-at-arms — show how women defined citizenship and illustrate the complexity of various suffrage campaigns. Jensen's third point concerns debates over women, war, and violence. "The violence of war," she writes, "had many effects on women's health and well-being, including sexual and physical assault, destruction of homes and property, poverty and dislocation" (114). Jensen argues that these groups of women sought to transform and redefine the military in ways that would protect women from violence. Fourth, Jensen analyzes their strategies before the war, the debates, and their wartime choices. She contends that women's activism during World War I ultimately affected how the nation understood and waged war. Just as women gained little actual power with suffrage, these wartime steps taken by female physicians, nurses, and women-at-arms were also, Jensen cautions, limited in scope. Jensen's case studies are compelling. For example, in her discussion of Americans' fascination with the Russian Battalion of Death, she draws on popular accounts to explain how women of the battalion took up arms as a way to shame men into assuming their role as protectors. The alleged "deviance" of the female soldier became one of the most effective talking points in anti-suffrage rhetoric because it underscored the failure of men as protectors. After the war, policy makers, civic leaders, and the media crafted a new model for citizenship by impelling former soldiers into new roles as consumer-civilians. This, according to Jensen, was as one prelude to an American century of militarization.

That Jensen brackets aspiring female medical professionals (physicians and nurses) along with women-at-arms under the same title challenges readers to consider anti-violence activism as an analytic framework for women, gender, and war. This is perhaps the book's greatest strength and weakness. Jensen ties these three groups of women together by emphasizing their unique strands of anti-violence activism. She examines how all-female medical units identified rape and violence as they negotiated their identities as women, aspiring professionals, and colonizers. She argues that military nurses sought rank as an antidote to hostile wartime workplaces. And she holds that

women-at-arms challenged the conventional gender roles of the male protector and female protectee.

But Jensen's anti-violence framework presents a serious quandary. To what extent did female physicians, military nurses, and women-at-arms tacitly (or explicitly) facilitate the role of government institutions in reproducing *new* forms of violence against women. Women in military medicine and nursing — particularly those seeking occupational respect, rank, and recognition — were not innocent bystanders in the reproduction of *new* forms of violence against women. More to the point, women's moves to professionalize (and gain fuller expressions of citizenship) were largely contingent upon the exploitation and oppression of non-dominant groups.

Particularly in the context of overlapping rubrics of professionalism and citizenship, more substantive attention to race and class would have balanced Jensen's arguments. There is truth in the notion that white, middle-class, native-born, Protestant women sought to transform the early twentieth-century military into an institution to protect women, but as aspiring medical professionals, they sought to protect a certain type of woman and a particular strain of white, native-born, middle-class, Protestant American womanhood. To what extent did aspiring professional medical women and nurses actually sustain and support normative race, class, and gender ideologies based on white male power? Perhaps more attention to the existing literature on maternalism and the role of these particular women in the creation of the welfare state would have enriched the analysis. Deeper consideration of the internecine conflicts within and among women in the expanding female medical hierarchy would have also been useful.

Precisely because this analysis raises more questions than it answers, *Mobilizing Minerva* will intrigue those interested in turn-of-the-century U.S. women's history. Given the rich history of women's activism in and around Fort Des Moines and Camp Dodge during World War I, Jensen's book will also appeal to Iowans seeking a broader foundation for understanding the political, economic, and cultural context of women's wartime activism in Progressive Era America. To be sure, women's anti-violence activism at home and abroad during World War I provides, as Jensen writes, "important lessons for continuing responses to the issues they confronted and those we confront today" (175).

Eight Women, Two Model Ts, and the American West, by Joanne Wilke. Women in the West Series. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007. 169 pp. Illustrations. \$18.95 paper.

Reviewer Susan Sessions Rugh is associate professor of history at Brigham Young University. She is the author of *Are We There Yet? The Golden Age of American Family Vacations* (2008).

In June 1924, eight single women from rural Iowa packed up two Model Ts and set out to see the West. Typical of the era's vagabonds, they camped all the way to California and back, and covered more than 9,000 miles of mostly dirt roads in nine weeks. Two of the women were sisters, the grandmother and great aunt of the author.

Years later, when Joanne Wilke discovered her grandmother's letters, her interest was piqued, but the old women could only remember "little bits of stories." The discovery of letters, diaries, and photographs from the other travelers provided her with enough material to write a book about their trip. She decided to weave in her own story because, "although separated by time, age, and geography, I found our stories blended so naturally that it should have been obvious" (5). The blending of the stories complicates the task of appealing to an audience. As a history of women travelers in the American West, this slim volume succeeds vividly. It is less successful as a nostalgic essay on Iowa farm women.

The story of the women travelers is captivating. They did just fine without men — ably changing tires, navigating flooded roads, cleaning spark plugs, and getting out to push the car up steep mountain passes. They were "thrilled" at the sight of the Rocky Mountains and fascinated by the "queerest rock formations" in the Garden of the Gods. It wasn't always easy; on a windy dusty day, "we had our sweaters buttoned up tite" [*sic*] and handkerchiefs "tied over our faces" (69). The women enjoyed stopping in the cities of the West to recover from desert drives. They put on dresses to tour San Francisco, where they explored Chinatown, went to the theater, and had their fortunes told. They camped in the West's national parks, swam in Yosemite Valley, hiked to Crater Lake, and were pestered by bears in Yellowstone. Their letters are refreshing in their obvious pride in their pluck, making the history of road travel in the 1920s come alive for readers. The snapshots, taken with a venerable Brownie camera, are charming.

The author interleaves the story of the travelers with a family story, focusing on Grandma Marie, who married her sister's husband after he was widowed. Wilke's words evocatively sketch the Iowa farm landscape with its high bluffs, old farmhouse, odd relatives, and rural neighborhood. The story ends with the author's reflections after her grandmother's death and her musings about her own life in Montana.

For a reader interested in the story of the women travelers, the family story interludes can be disruptive. Nonetheless, the book is an

entertaining read, clearly written, and a fine illustration of the history of travel in the period. The book is suitable for classroom use in courses in women's studies, the twentieth-century West, or travel, although students may be tempted to disentangle the narratives to follow the story that most interests them.

When Tillage Begins, Other Arts Follow: Grant Wood and Christian Petersen Murals, by Lea Rosson DeLong. Ames: University Museums, Iowa State University, 2006. xlii, 398 pp. Illustrations (some color), notes, appendixes, chronology, exhibition checklist, index. \$55.00 cloth.

Reviewer Galin Berrier is adjunct instructor in history at Des Moines Area Community College. He has been a docent at the Des Moines Art Center since 1997.

When Tillage Begins, Other Arts Follow was published to coincide with the exhibition by that name organized by the Brunner Art Museum at Iowa State University in the fall of 2006. DeLong is the leading authority on Depression-era art in 1930s Iowa, including the work of both Iowa native Grant Wood and Iowa State artist-in-residence Christian Petersen. The work under review here is an in-depth examination of the Grant Wood and Christian Petersen murals at Iowa State as well as the first historical study of the short-lived Public Works of Art Project (PWAP) in Iowa.

DeLong's first chapter is devoted to the PWAP, less well-known than other New Deal art programs that produced post office and courthouse murals in Iowa and elsewhere. Already well known nationally thanks to his famous painting *American Gothic* (1930), Grant Wood was selected as PWAP director in Iowa. Although Wood was not known heretofore for murals, Iowa State's president, Raymond M. Hughes, had already commissioned him to paint murals for the college. Wood "saw mural painting as not only a public form of art, but one that could disseminate a philosophy, in his case, Regionalism" (9).

In selecting artists for the project, he was at pains to include, along with "modern" artists who had been part of the Stone City art colony, members of the "conservative" faction, especially students of Charles Atherton Cumming of Des Moines and later the University of Iowa. The artists worked in a studio converted from a swimming pool in the Old Armory, or Library Annex, on the university campus in Iowa City. Wood believed that a "harmonious tone . . . had existed in the swimming pool studio" (35) and was shocked to learn that a petition bearing the signatures of 21 artists had been sent to Washington, D.C., objecting to his leadership of any future federal arts projects in Iowa (41).

He would never again have anything to do with government art projects or with any of his former PWAP colleagues.

In her second chapter DeLong shows how Iowa State, a land grant college dedicated to the practical arts of agriculture, engineering, and home economics, came to be noted for its Art on Campus program, which has grown to become the nation's largest campus public art collection (334–35). She gives much of the credit for this to President Hughes, who not only arranged for Christian Petersen to become the first permanent campus artist-in-residence in the United States, but for a time supplemented Petersen's modest salary from his own pocket. Chapter three contains a detailed examination of the mural cycle *When Tillage Begins, Other Arts Follow* and its relationship to Grant Wood's other work. In chapter four DeLong discusses the "Iowa Cooperative," which produced those murals. She also provides sketches of the individual artists. Two of the most important were John Bloom, a native of DeWitt, Iowa, who also painted the post office murals in DeWitt and Tipton, Iowa, and Francis McCray, who was most responsible after Wood himself for executing *When Tillage Begins*. McCray also supervised the execution of another Iowa State mural, *Breaking the Prairie*, the subject of chapter five. Both were installed in Parks Library and complement each other, but *Breaking the Prairie* was not completed until 1939, several years after the PWAP ended.

DeLong's final chapter is devoted to Christian Petersen's sculpted mural *The History of Dairying*, a seven-panel series of low reliefs designed specifically for the courtyard of the Dairy Industry Building at Iowa State. The dairying panels were drawn in the swimming pool studio in Iowa City but cast in terra cotta at Ames. Petersen's original concept reflected the late nineteenth-century Beaux Arts style in which he had previously worked, but Wood apparently influenced him to drastically modify it in a "modernist" style to better harmonize with the Parks Library murals. When it was installed, Wood visited the Dairy courtyard with Petersen "and paced back and forth in front of the seven-panel series. Finally, he stood back and announced that the reliefs were too low, an opinion that annoyed Petersen considerably" (318).

The Grant Wood and Christian Petersen murals at Iowa State have been admirably preserved by the university, but other New Deal-era murals in Iowa have not been so fortunate. In the late 1940s a 110-foot-long mural at the Iowa State Fairgrounds in Des Moines was torn up and used for scrap on the orders of Fair Board secretary Lloyd Cunningham, who said, "The mural wasn't art; it was WPA" (52n). DeLong's book reminds us of the remarkable artistic heritage of which we are

the custodians, and of our obligation to preserve and bequeath it unimpaired to future generations. It is a work of impeccable scholarship, gracefully written, that should appeal to both art scholars and students of Iowa's history.

Our Daily Bread: Wages, Workers, and the Political Economy of the American West, by Geoff Mann. Cultural Studies of the United States. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007. xviii, 245 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$59.95 cloth, \$19.95 paper.

Reviewer Gregory R. Zieren is professor of history at Austin Peay State University. His writing includes "German Contemporary Studies of American Labor, 1865-1914" (*Labor History*, 1995) and "Cedar Rapids Packinghouse Workers in the CIO" (*Palimpsest*, 1995).

This slender volume is an ambitious exercise in crafting a new definition of wages based on the Marxian-Hegelian dialectic and insights gained from the work of economic geographers. The author, a Marxist professor of economic geography, employs three case studies from western labor history in the twentieth century to illuminate his theoretical constructs. He divides the book into two theoretical chapters, three historical ones, a sixth chapter demonstrating the fit between theory and practice, and a conclusion. The case studies, of hitherto little-known unions on the West Coast, are the heart of the book and offer a welcome addition to the literature on labor history. Readers may admire the erudition, even elegance, of the author's theoretical work, but it will not persuade many beyond those already steeped in the Marxian tradition.

In his introduction and first chapter Mann clarifies why the Far West inspired his work. The West of popular mythology is always white and masculine, so race and gender issues become an overlay on the landscape. The West first industrialized through natural resource exploitation, and high wages were a reflection of the region's labor scarcity. At the same time, exploitation, whether in mining or lumber camps, often took place in isolated places and company towns where the contradictions between capitalists and workers were at their starkest. The West, furthermore, had more than its share of labor radicalism, from the days of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in the early years of the twentieth century to the San Francisco longshoremen in the great strike of 1934 and beyond. How to make sense of this complex set of influences on wages is Mann's objective.

In chapter two he dissects, and rejects, alternative economic interpretations of the wage. The focus of neoclassical economics on supply

and demand and equilibrium renders it inadequate to capture historical change, while the Keynesian version relegates wages to a column under aggregate demand. The institutional school came closer to the truth, in Mann's view, and complemented the work of Italian economist Piero Sraffa, a friend and collaborator of Antonio Gramsci's. Mann calls for a "cultural politics of the wage" (47) and labels his specific approach "the politics of measure, a struggle over the social meaning of capitalism's obsession with quantity" (148).

Mann's case studies examine in detail the Oil Well Workers International Union strike in Los Angeles in 1945, African American timber workers in northern California in the early 1920s, and the International Fishermen and Allied Workers of America on the West Coast in the 1940s and 1950s. The Los Angeles union contended with the loss of wages caused by the end of wartime production and overtime pay. In addition, companies chafed against the price constraints of the Office of Price Administration and eagerly sought a return to ordinary business conditions. In Mann's view, the strike was not merely the quest for "More," in Samuel Gompers's classic formulation. Instead, the strike revolved around the threat of women in the workplace and "the recovery of the patriarchal private sphere" (65). Mann's interpretation suggests a deeper reading of the reconversion turmoil in 1945–46 that featured the greatest strike wave in American history. Most labor historians have found good and sufficient reasons for the postwar strikes, reasons Mann barely acknowledges in his quest to fashion his own interpretation. The omission simply raises more questions than he answers.

Mann's case study of African American workers near Weed, California, brought from the South to work in the timber industry is his most intriguing. A company based in the Louisiana timber country bought land and imported labor in northern California during World War I. He details the patterns of residential segregation, systematic job discrimination, social ostracism, and scapegoating by white workers that African Americans suffered. He analyzes technological change and wide price swings in the market for lumber and their impact on workers, black and white.

Mann's final case study is both the most complicated and least analytically satisfying. Between a quarter and a third of the fishermen, including fishing boat owners, joined the International Fishermen and Allied Workers of America in the 1940s. Were they petty commodity producers because each owned a share of the catch, or were they simple wage earners? The ambiguity caught the union in a legal web of anti-trust prosecutions and McCarthyite pressure against its left-wing leadership in the 1950s until the union's demise in 1959.

Mann's final chapters attempt to link theory and practice in not entirely convincing fashion. He concedes that more conventional economic and historical interpretations could explain the effects of working-class behavior on wages in his three examples. In his quest for a deeper reading of the evidence and use of theory to enliven historical scholarship from a radical or Marxian perspective, there is much to admire. At the same time, readers have to cope with jargon and stale theoretical debates. For those who believe there is still life in the limbs of the body of theory Mann invokes, his study will be provocative and stimulating. For the rest there are still three good case studies in labor history to appreciate.

Union-Free America: Workers and Antiunion Culture, by Lawrence Richards. The Working Class in American History Series. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008. x, 245 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliographic references, index. \$40.00 cloth.

Reviewer Martin Halpern is professor of history at Henderson State University. He is the author of *Unions, Radicals, and Democratic Presidents: Seeking Social Change in the Twentieth Century* (2003).

Lawrence Richards argues that labor historians, fascinated by struggles for unionization, have neglected the large number of workers who have been hostile to unions. Richards's focus is the 1970s and 1980s, a period when the unionized percentage of the labor force was declining rapidly. His goal is to explain why workers told pollsters in that period that they would vote against a union at their workplace in a secret ballot election. He acknowledges the roles of employer hostility and an unfavorable labor law environment in contributing to labor's difficulties but argues that workers' anti-unionism, derived from an anti-union culture, was an important factor, too.

Richards's introduction and the book's cover illustration highlight Nissan workers' rejection of the United Auto Workers union in Smyrna, Tennessee, in 1989. The workers cheered their anti-union vote as a victory for "Americanism," as they waved American flags and held aloft a "Union Free and Proud" sign. Although Richards asks, "Why were these workers so opposed to organized labor?" (2), the book includes no analysis of the Nissan episode but addresses the question only in a general way and through other case studies.

Documenting evidence of anti-unionism in American culture from the late nineteenth century onward, Richards spends nearly half of the book treading familiar ground. As other scholars have, Richards notes that unions gained support as representatives of low-paid workers

and advocates for the underdog in the 1930s but lost legitimacy due to union flaws, a postwar anti-union offensive by business, the rise in union workers' incomes during the economic boom, and the emergence of new advocates for the underprivileged. The chief problems with this section of the book are the assumption that articles in mainstream publications such as *Reader's Digest* accurately convey what workers were thinking and insufficient attention to contrary evidence.

Richards examines two local union representation campaigns in which workers voted against unions. The most interesting part of the book is the analysis of workers' rejection in 1980 of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers' Union (ACTWU) by a vote of 318 to 105 at a Charlottesville, Virginia, textile mill. He argues that the company defeated the union "because its message to employees was geared to reinforcing an image of organized labor that most of them already held" (123). The anti-union arguments included the idea that the union was an outside influence that would undermine the cooperative environment at the company, interfere with workers' personal relationships with their supervisors, force workers to strike, and waste workers' dues money without increasing their wages because of the nature of the industry and the weakness of the union. Richards acknowledges that the company punished union activists and issued threats, but he sees the workers' own anti-union proclivities as more important in explaining their votes. Although the portrait he gives of workers' thinking is persuasive, Richards gives insufficient weight to a labor law environment that permitted company interference in workers' representation decisions and the resulting impossibility of disentangling an independent worker viewpoint from a contaminated process.

To demonstrate that anti-union culture was not limited to the South, Richards analyzes the unsuccessful campaign of District 65 to represent New York University's clerical workers. In June 1971, District 65 won 385 votes, 115 workers voted for a more conservative union, and 926 workers voted for no union. The reader learns that District 65 did significantly better in a 1970 vote before the administration shifted from a neutral to an anti-union stance and gave a big wage increase. Richards contends, however, that the campaigns on all sides were shaped by worker prejudices against unionism, and the arguments were thus quite similar to those that would later be made in Charlottesville. The handling of the evidence in the NYU story is less adroit. For example, Richards quotes at length from an anonymous anti-union letter by an individual who claimed to be a clerical worker without providing evidence that the letter had any influence or was actually written by a clerical worker.

Richards's third case study is the competition between the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) for the right to represent the nation's schoolteachers. Richardson argues persuasively that both organizations to a degree drew on anti-union ideas to appeal to teachers. However, Richards's acknowledgment that the NEA by the mid-1980s "would come to openly embrace the 'union' label" (155) and was proud to assert that it conducted more strikes than the AFT undermines his thesis that the period was one dominated by anti-union culture.

Jarring to this reader were Richards's contention that "the very idea of unionism . . . embodied a masculine ideology" (83), the use of the term "workingman" (179) to refer to all workers, and the assertion that the NEA's condemnation of AFT racism constituted using "the race issue" and "the racist image of organized labor" rather than substantive criticism (171-72).

Virtual America: Sleepwalking through Paradise, by John Opie. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008. xviii, 260 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$45.00 cloth.

Reviewer Gregory Summers is associate professor of history at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. He is the author of *Consuming Nature: Environmentalism in the Fox River Valley, 1850-1950* (2006).

In the growing age of virtual reality, many commentators have offered critiques of the American preference for the imagined world of video games, chat rooms, and "Second Life" avatars over the actual world of real-life people and places. These new digital technologies, embraced largely by the youngest generations of Americans, have been blamed for everything from rising violence and childhood obesity to the breakdown of the family. And yet, because few such critics have bothered to look back at the long tradition of imagined realities in American history, their complaints often ring hollow and somewhat cranky.

In *Virtual America*, John Opie offers a rare exception to this rule: a study of "how we Americans have historically dreamed about creating a better life in daily ordinary existence" that takes virtual reality seriously but also offers a substantive critique of the sense of placelessness it has created (xii). Opie is well qualified to write on the topic. An emeritus professor of history at the New Jersey Institute of Technology, he has been a longtime student of place, region, and environment in American history, authoring books such as *Nature's Nation: An Environmental History of the United States* and *Ogallala: Water for a Dry Land*. Although *Virtual America* is, in Opie's words, "neither a philosophical work nor a

conventional history," it nonetheless persuasively argues that virtual reality is nothing new in the United States (ix). Understanding this history, in turn, lends credibility to the argument that the American penchant for imagined realities has produced some troubling consequences.

Opie begins by noting that virtual reality need not depend on the recent spate of digital technologies. In fact, he argues, the notion might just as easily apply to the numerous "mental images through which we Americans have explained ourselves, our national geography, and our nation, past and present" (ix). Opie classifies these images under three broad headings: "the Engineered America of our built environment, the Consumer America of our passion for material well-being, and the Triumphal America of our conviction that we are the exceptional model for the rest of the world" (xii–xiii). In a series of connected essays that constitute the heart of the book, Opie then explores these layers of imagined reality, each of which stretches far back in the American past. "Europeans," for example, Opie notes, "did not discover America; they invented it" (42), bending the landscapes of the New World they encountered to match their dreams of material wealth, Christian missionary expansion, and individual opportunity. In many ways, these dreams served as "filters [that] shut out alternate views and prevented Europeans from seeing the New World on its own terms" (43). Much the same habit characterized later American attitudes toward their rapidly growing nation, as people sought an authentic American identity in natural wonders such as Niagara Falls and mountainous western landscapes and, at the same time, in the burgeoning creations of modern society such as the Brooklyn Bridge and the nation's smoke-filled industrial cities. Opie points in particular to the nineteenth-century rise of tourism and landscape art as evidence of the American preference for imagined realities. "Americans," he argues, "did not want nature on its own terms" (59). Instead, they preferred a landscape sanitized of Native Americans, dangerous animals, and discomforts of any kind. Likewise, the virtual America on display in the era's world's fairs offered equally sanitized visions of industrial progress. Eventually, the twentieth-century emergence of mass consumerism only exaggerated these kinds of disconnections — both natural and industrial — and led directly to the growing sense of placelessness that characterizes our present "sleepwalking" through the American landscape.

Many of Opie's insights will not be surprising to readers, especially to environmental historians and writers who have long been engaged in detailed critiques of the American relationship to landscape, environment, and place. Yet, in persuasively linking the modern digital technologies of imagined reality to their historical antecedents,

Opie has produced an important book and a new framework for understanding the story, one that is all the more relevant the more virtual our reality becomes.

Jacob's Well: A Case for Rethinking Family History, by Joseph A. Amato. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2008. xvi, 279 pp. Illustrations, genealogical chart, notes. \$32.95 cloth.

Reviewer Marjorie L. McLellan is associate professor of history at Wright State University. She is the author of *Six Generations Here: A Farm Family Remembers*.

Reading Joseph Amato's *Jacob's Well*, I realize how rarely I do justice to everyday experience in relation to historical developments and patterns. Amato argues, "Unless we would deny the humanity of our family and the humanistic goal of history, we must not sacrifice families and the individual lives of their members to impersonal laws and generalizations." He describes, for example, the intergenerational experience of first rural and then urban poverty — "they yoked themselves to the perennial condition of the rural poor: never having adequate land or sufficient money until death did them part" — and he imagines the psychological toll of that precarious way of life (135). His research draws on genealogy and local history, along with national and international histories, but he also looks inward to "reconstitute the emotions, sensibilities, motives, beliefs, and metaphors that moved and guided family members" (12).

Cultural historians, sociologists, and folklorists concerned with ethnicity, class, gender, and family will find much to consider here. Of his own grandparents, for example, Amato writes, "Frances and William brought no ethnicity to serve as a social compass and direct them to preferred neighborhoods and churches. Frances's ethnicity, a mixture of English, old American, and Acadian, had long been erased by a succession of migrations, intermarriages, and isolations in the remote countryside" (60). The author circles back to the same characters, the most recent generations, and the individuals who touched his life most directly. At times, his effort to call forth individuals in the round, to evoke their rich personalities and experiences, becomes a bit tedious. On the whole, however, he has brought together the storytelling, characters, contexts, and events in a compelling meditation on the history of the family.

In each chapter, Amato drops a pebble, such as a family photograph, into the stream of memory, and the ripples evoke stories around a theme ranging widely across place — from Sicily and the Canadian Maritimes to rural Wisconsin and then Detroit — and time.

"A Memorable Death, a Common Lot" begins with the image of a young couple, James Boodry and Ellen Frances Sayers, on their wedding day in 1867. Boodry, just turned 19, stares at the camera, eliciting this personal response from the author:

Take him out of his high leather work boots and his baggy, ill-fitting coat, and put him in my high school prom tuxedo, stand him in front of my father's 1956 Chevrolet, and we are one and the same person. Our faces, hands, body, and posture match, although I imagine below his baggy clothing he was far more muscular than I and felt more confident about getting married and taking up a life with a woman, children, horses, sawmills, and the poor fields of central Wisconsin than I had at the same age (128).

Amato seems to shiver as he tells the story of Boodry's violent death; then he goes on to tell of other lives and deaths.

Family stories drive *Jacob's Well*, but, ever the historian, Amato analyzes each life, event, circumstance, and personality trait for organizing themes and explanations (147). In introducing "Jacob, the Rise and Fall of a Plebian Patriarch," Amato reflects on the constraints of writing narrative history. "I am forced," he writes, "to tell the story of this distinct family, composed of unique individuals and different ethnicities, which experienced the formation of modern industrial society and the birth of mass popular culture, principally as a simple story: the rise and fall of an immigrant" (147). We are "born out of our biological inheritance and made of material conditions, local circumstances, and historical change" (244). In his portrayal, wider economic change, as well as the family's poverty, pressed all around the struggling Boodry family: "the city came to them before they went to the city. It entered their hearts and lives in the form of new needs, fresh wants, and novel and unimagined innovations. It came by the medium of the Sears catalogue" (139).

Amato's account is deeply personal and reflective: wrapping up this project, he was both ecstatic and exhausted. The lived experiences of his family, embodied in family stories and ingrained in personalities, have shaped and given meaning to his own life. This is particularly evident when he calls forth the threads of religious faith woven through past and present. Angered by James Boodry's life and death, Amato shouts, "God, why do you let us, our kind, die the worst of deaths!" (145). While he presents a well-documented family history, Amato acknowledges that, "in effect, I had to discover and invent them, remember and resurrect them" (12). In *Jacob's Well*, Amato makes the case for rethinking how we look at our own family stories as well as rethinking how we conceive of the diversity of family experiences in American history.

New on the Shelves

“New on the Shelves” is a list of recent additions to the collections of the State Historical Society of Iowa. It includes manuscripts, audio-visual materials, and published materials recently acquired or newly processed that we think might be of interest to the readers of the *Annals of Iowa*. The “DM” or “IC” at the end of each entry denotes whether the item is held in Des Moines or Iowa City.

Manuscripts

Des Moines Ballet (Ballet Iowa). Records, 1974–1997. 3½ ft. Primarily scrapbooks containing press coverage, publicity materials, ephemera, and photographs documenting the activities of this troupe and its supporting association. DM.

Heckart, Joseph. Two letters, 1862. Civil War letters written by Sergeant Joseph Heckart (Ottumwa) while serving in Company D of the 15th Iowa Infantry. DM.

Homewood, Albert. Letter, July 1, 1864; 1 black-and-white photograph. Civil War letter written by Private Albert Homewood (Hopeville) while serving in Company I of the 15th Iowa Infantry, accompanied by carte-de-visite portrait of the soldier. DM.

Mills, Noah W. Two letters, July 19 and July 23, 1861. Civil War letters written by Colonel Noah W. Mills (Des Moines) while serving in Company D of the 2nd Iowa Infantry. DM.

Polk County Medical Society. Records, 2006–2009. 2 ft. New addition of membership files containing applications and other biographical information on practitioners joining this professional organization. DM.

White, Charles Abiathar. Papers, 1863–1904. ¼ ft. Approximately 175 letters written to this American geologist and paleontologist who served as Iowa’s state geologist (1866–1869) and was a professor of natural history at the State University of Iowa (1867–1873). Letters are from such prominent colleagues in the natural sciences as James D. Dana, Hans Bruno Geinitz, Giovanni Capellini, and Louis Agassiz. Collection also includes various certificates of award and appointment received by White. DM.

Audio-Visual

Floods. 1 DVD, 2008. Color, 1 hr. 42 mins. *Epic Surge: Eastern Iowa’s Unstoppable Flood of 2008*, KCRG-TV, Cedar Rapids, Iowa. DM.

Gordon, William ("Ted"). 16 black-and-white photographs, 1916–1918. Snapshots showing activities of this Des Moines resident at Camp Cody (Deming, NM), where he trained for military service. DM.

Iowa towns. 32 postcards, ca. 1910–1930. Cedar Rapids (aerial view, Westminster Church); Charles City (high school, Main Street bridge); Clinton (Mercy Hospital, St. Mary's School); Dubuque (Julien Hotel, monastery, German Theological Seminary, Mt. St. Joseph College, Majestic Theatre, mill on road to Sageville); Ft. Dodge (courthouse); Harlan (Baldwin Street); Mason City (First Congregational Church, public library, Central School); Osage (Spring Park); Sibley (aerial view, Osceola County courthouse); Spencer (Grace Methodist Church, First Congregational Church); Storm Lake (park); Vinton (Baptist church fire); Waterloo (Sacred Heart Church, East Side Library); Webster City (First National Bank, Des Moines Street). DM.

Maytag Manufacturing Company (Newton). 22 black-and-white photographs, 1952–1978. Images of employees and products from files of the company's publicity and publications department. DM.

Transportation. 8 black-and-white photographs, ca. 1890–ca. 1911. Images of Sioux City's early mass transit systems, including views of the first elevated railway train on its maiden voyage (April 1891), streetcars, and maintenance cars used to maintain overhead electrical lines. DM.

World Food Prize. 1 DVD, April 19, 2008. Color, 2 hrs. 15 mins. *The Fifth Annual Hoover-Wallace Dinner: Honoring Sen. John Culver, Dr. Ignacio Ponseti, and Rep. Jim Leach*. DM.

Published Materials

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