

# The Annals of Iowa

Volume 74 Number 2  
Spring 2015



A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF HISTORY

## In This Issue

BRIE SWENSON ARNOLD, assistant professor of history at Coe College, offers an account of an unsuccessful effort by seven African American women in Cedar Rapids to break the color line at a garment factory in 1897. Arnold sets that effort thoroughly in the context of the experience of African American and Bohemian American working-class women in the city at the turn of the twentieth century.

PAM STEK, a doctoral candidate and graduate instructor in history at the University of Iowa, provides a detailed account of another instance of labor activism in Cedar Rapids at the turn of the twentieth century, a strike by women workers at the American Cereal Company in 1898. Stek argues that the strike is illuminating for several reasons: it reflects the experience of the vast majority of working women who did not join unions; it was a rare instance when local newspapers took the strikers' cause seriously; and the strikers were able to prevail against ethnic discrimination and powerful company resistance to their efforts to shape the conditions of their employment and to gain recognition as competent and serious workers.

## Front Cover

Marshall and Louisa Perkins (center, in doorway) are pictured with their children and staff, circa 1900, in front of Marshall's Restaurant, one of the few racially integrated workplaces in turn-of-the-century Cedar Rapids. From the collection of the African American Museum of Iowa, Gift of Harriet Perkins. Both articles in this issue are devoted to the experiences of working women in Cedar Rapids at the turn of the twentieth century.

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# The Annals of Iowa

Third Series, Vol. 74, No. 2  
Spring 2015  
Marvin Bergman, editor

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## Contents

- 101 An Opportunity to Challenge the “Color Line”:  
Gender, Race, Ethnicity, and Women’s Labor Activism  
in Late Nineteenth-Century Cedar Rapids, Iowa  
*Brie Swenson Arnold*
- 142 The 1898 American Cereal Company Strike  
in Cedar Rapids: Gender, Ethnicity, and Labor  
in Late Nineteenth-Century Iowa  
*Pam Stek*
- 177 Hollywood in the Heartland:  
A Review Essay  
*Barbara Ching*
- 183 Book Reviews and Notices
- 215 Announcement
- 

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF HISTORY FOUNDED IN 1863  
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ISSN 0003-4827

## Review Essay

- 177 MARTY S. KNEPPER AND JOHN SHELTON LAWRENCE, *The Book of Iowa Films*  
LEO LANDIS, CURATOR, *Hollywood in the Heartland*  
by Barbara Ching

## Book Reviews and Notices

- 183 JOHN L. RILEY, *The Once and Future Great Lakes Country: An Ecological History*, by Kevin C. Brown
- 185 ROGER L. NICHOLS, *American Indians in U.S. History*, by Donald L. Parman
- 185 DEREK R. EVERETT, *Creating the American West: Boundaries and Borderlands*, by William E. Lass
- 187 WILLIAM E. LASS, *Shaping the North Star State: A History of Minnesota's Boundaries*, by Derek R. Everett
- 189 ALEX BEAM, *American Crucifixion: The Murder of Joseph Smith and the Fate of the Mormon Church*, by Todd M. Kerstetter
- 190 THOMAS P. MCKENNA, *From Vicksburg to Cedar Creek: The 22nd Iowa Infantry in the Civil War*, by Kenneth L. Lyftogt
- 192 JOSEPH R. REINHART, ED., *Yankee Dutchmen under Fire: Civil War Letters from the 82nd Illinois Infantry*, by Paul Fessler
- 193 WILLIAM A. BLAIR, *With Malice toward Some: Treason and Loyalty in the Civil War Era*, by Victoria Bryant Stewart
- 194 JARED PEATMAN, *The Long Shadow of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address*, by Stacy Pratt McDermott
- 196 DAVID B. DANBOM, *Sod Busting: How Families Made Farms on the 19th-Century Plains*, by Jeff Bremer
- 198 SUSAN ELMORE, *Nameless Indignities: Unraveling the Mystery of One of Illinois's Most Infamous Crimes*, by Jeffrey S. Adler
- 199 GRETA NETTLETON, *The Quack's Daughter: A True Story about the Private Life of a Victorian College Girl*, by Jane Simonsen
- 201 KENNETH J. BINDAS, ED., *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Construction of the Virginia Kendall Reserve, 1933–1939*, by Angela Sirna
- 202 M. M. HELM, *Prairie Boys at War: Korea, volume 1, June–October 1950*, by Paul M. Edwards
- 203 MARILYN IRVIN HOLT, *Cold War Kids: Politics and Childhood in Postwar America, 1945–1960*, by Jennifer Robin Terry
- 205 J. L. ANDERSON, ED., *The Rural Midwest since World War II*, by Coreen Derifield
- 208 DIANE JOHNSON, *Flyover Lives: A Memoir*, by Zachary Michael Jack
- 210 JOHN HILDEBRAND, *The Heart of Things: A Midwestern Almanac*, by Barbara J. Dilly
- 211 MIKE HOEFT, *The Bingo Queens of Oneida*, by Kathleen Ratterree
- 213 LAURENCE GONZALES, *Flight 232: A Story of Disaster and Survival*, by Frank Durham

# An Opportunity to Challenge the “Color Line”: Gender, Race, Ethnicity, and Women’s Labor Activism in Late Nineteenth-Century Cedar Rapids, Iowa

BRIE SWENSON ARNOLD

LATE IN THE SUMMER OF 1897, 20-year-old Emma Oliphant noticed a help wanted ad in the *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*: “WANTED: Overall and duck coat makers. Apply at factory. Liddle & Carter.” The ad appeared in the *Gazette* on numerous occasions throughout August as Liddle & Carter attempted to fill dozens of sewing positions in its garment factory in downtown Cedar Rapids.<sup>1</sup> The ad was not unusual—Liddle & Carter and

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The author wishes to thank Cinnamon Moore, Mia Phifer, and Emily Weber for their research assistance and Marvin Bergman and the *Annals of Iowa*'s anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this article. Research for this article was supported by Ella Pochobradsky Endowment Grants for Faculty-Student Research at Coe College.

1. Bureau of the Census, U.S. Federal Census (1900) (this and all census information throughout accessed via ancestry.com); “Wanted—Overall & Duck Coat Makers,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette* (hereafter cited as *Gazette*), 8/6/1897, 8/9/1897, 8/14/1897, 8/16/1897, 8/17/1897, 8/20/1897, and 8/25/1897. Liddle & Carter produced men’s shirts, coats, and overalls. It was established in Cedar Rapids in the 1870s and employed as many as 100 women and men by the 1890s. “Wholesale Furnishing Goods & Manufacturing Business,” *Linn County Timelines: The Newsletter of the Linn County Historical Society* (October 1997), in “Manufacturers” file, Linn County Historical Society Library and Archives, Cedar Rapids; “New Factory: Liddle & Carter Make Plans for the Future,” *Gazette*, 5/6/1897.

THE ANNALS OF IOWA 74 (Spring 2015). © The State Historical Society of Iowa, 2015.

many factories in Cedar Rapids routinely advertised for female operatives in the 1890s—but something about this ad stuck in Emma Oliphant’s mind. Maybe it was because garment factory positions were among the best-paying jobs for women in the city. Maybe Oliphant had heard about this kind of work from the many women living in her neighborhood who worked at Liddle & Carter. Maybe, since the factory was looking to hire many new operatives, Oliphant was excited about the prospect of landing a position for herself and several of her good friends. Or maybe this was just the opportunity she had been waiting for to challenge the “color line” in women’s factory work in Cedar Rapids.

Help wanted ads like those placed by Liddle & Carter never said so, but factory jobs for women in late nineteenth-century Cedar Rapids were understood to be for white women only. Emma Oliphant and the six other African American women who decided to apply at Liddle & Carter in August 1897 surely knew that. Still, they resolved to collectively confront the racial discrimination that existed in women’s work in Cedar Rapids. With Oliphant leading the effort, the seven women easily secured sewing jobs through written correspondence with Liddle & Carter manager Chester E. Clark.<sup>2</sup>

Yet when Oliphant, Mattie Wade, Mary Bowlin, Flora Bouey, Jessie Martin, Pearl Wood, and Mattie Price arrived at the factory, “ready to begin their labors” on the morning of September 2, “there was trouble.” “The white women and girls” already working at Liddle & Carter “rose up unanimously and threatened to leave the employment of the company in case the colored girls were allowed to work.” For more than an hour that Thursday morning, words were exchanged between the existing female employees, manager Clark, and at least one of the new hires—Emma Oliphant. At some point during the confrontation, Clark “became very angry and tried to thrust them [the seven black women] from the building, and in doing so he shoved Miss Emma Oliphant against the door, almost breaking her arm.” Clark told the seven new hires that “the whites would leave were

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2. “Threatened to Strike,” *Gazette*, 9/2/1897. On Clark’s identity, see Cedar Rapids City Directories (1895–1900), Digital Archives of the Marion Public Library, <http://mpl.newspaperarchive.com>; Iowa State Census (1895); Federal Census (1900).

the colored girls allowed to sit down to a machine." Because he claimed he couldn't afford to "lose seventy skilled employees," Clark said he was "compelled to draw the color line." But the matter was not resolved in that moment. Emma Oliphant and the six other "girls would not be dealt with in such a way." They said they would continue to "report for work" at Liddle & Carter "until they learn definitely whether they will be allowed to work." With the hiring of the black women still in question, the white women workers went ahead with their strike.<sup>3</sup>

The story of the confrontation at Liddle & Carter offers compelling insights into the complexities of women's work, labor activism, and consciousness in late nineteenth-century America, when the "color line" was being redrawn and challenged in many places across the United States. In Cedar Rapids in the late 1890s, diverse working women launched labor protests in efforts to improve their working conditions and to assert collective, if racially specific, senses of themselves as both laborers and ladies. The actions and collective identities of the black and white women involved in the events surrounding the conflict at Liddle & Carter were shaped not only by gender and class but by race, ethnicity, and the social and economic dynamics of the diverse community that was turn-of-the-century Cedar Rapids. This case offers a glimpse into the nuances of race and ethnicity in women's work and labor activism, northern racial discrimination and resistance to it on the part of black women, and what historian Eric Arnesen refers to as "white labor's role in maintaining and even creating Jim Crow."<sup>4</sup>

From the 1860s onward, African American women in Iowa and across the nation became particularly influential advocates for black rights and equality.<sup>5</sup> By emphasizing their status as "ladies,"

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3. "Threatened to Strike," *Gazette*, 9/2/1897; "Cedar Rapids Budgetarian" (hereafter cited as "CRB"), *Iowa State Bystander* (hereafter cited as *Bystander*), 9/10/1897; "News in Iowa," *Marion Sentinel*, 9/30/1897; "Color Line," *Gazette*, 9/4/1897.

4. Eric Arnesen, "Up from Exclusion: Black and White Workers, Race, and the State of Labor History," *Reviews in American History* 26 (1998), 149.

5. Leslie Schwalm, *Emancipation's Diaspora: Race and Reconstruction in the Upper Midwest* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2009); Barbara Young Welke, *Recasting American Liberty: Gender, Race, Law, and the Railroad Revolution, 1865-1920* (New York, 2001); Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present* (New York, 1985); Tera Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom:*

black women asserted that gender entitled them to particular job opportunities, social prerogatives, and legal rights often denied them because of race. Such claims, the women hoped, might open the door to better opportunities, treatment, and rights for themselves and for African Americans more broadly. The activism of Emma Oliphant and the six other black women who attempted to desegregate women's work at Liddle & Carter offers a compelling example of this. With their action, Oliphant and the other women deliberately challenged racist practices and assumptions and asserted their right to be treated fairly as laborers and ladies. At the same time, the white women already working at Liddle & Carter launched protests and asserted their own sense of themselves as ladies and laborers that was rooted in their racial and ethnic identity. During the latter phases of the nineteenth century – amid urbanization, industrialization, labor unrest, major migrations to and within the United States, enduring and emerging patterns of racial discrimination, and shifts in women's work, "urban black women entered this maelstrom as labor activists or determined opponents to Jim Crow."<sup>6</sup>

ALL OF THOSE CURRENTS swirled through and shaped Cedar Rapids, yet scholars have done little to document the city's rich working-class, women's, and African American history. In many ways, Cedar Rapids was a prototypical American city during the age of immigration, industrialization, and urbanization. In the decades following the Civil War, its population expanded dramatically from about 1,000 residents in 1860 to 10,000 by 1880 and nearly 41,000 by 1915.<sup>7</sup> Such cities, observes historian Sharon Wood, offer a far more typical picture of the experiences of ordinary Americans in this period than those of more oft-studied cities like New York City and Chicago. By 1880, Wood explains,

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*Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors after the Civil War* (Cambridge, MA, 1998); Deborah Gray White, *Too Heavy a Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves, 1894–1994* (New York, 1999).

6. Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*, 147.

7. "Urban Population," in *Census of Iowa for the Year 1915* (Des Moines, 1915), 579; State Data Center of Iowa, "Total Population for Iowa's Incorporated Places: 1850–2000," <http://data.iowadatacenter.org/datatables/PlacesAll/plpopulation18502000.pdf>; Harold F. Ewoldt, "C.R. History," *Gazette*, 8/13/1989.

“more Americans lived in urban places of twelve thousand to seventy-five thousand than in cities with populations of half a million or more.”<sup>8</sup>

Between 1870 and 1920, diverse peoples were drawn to Cedar Rapids by the prospect of employment and economic opportunities. The city was home to some of the nation’s – indeed, the world’s – largest cereal and meatpacking plants, including American Cereal Company (the forerunner to Quaker Oats) and Sinclair & Company (later Wilson and Company).<sup>9</sup> Smaller factories, banks, retail shops, department stores, hospitals, schools, and offices also emerged throughout the city.

The rapid growth of industry brought an influx of people from a wide variety of places, making Cedar Rapids more ethnically and racially diverse than many other locales in Iowa and the Midwest. Around the turn of the twentieth century, immigrants and the children of newly arrived immigrants made up half the population of Cedar Rapids.<sup>10</sup> Immigrants from many backgrounds, including Irish, German, Canadian, Swedish, Swiss, Syrian, and Lebanese, resided in Cedar Rapids, with Bohemians constituting the largest ethnic group.<sup>11</sup> In fact, the vast majority of the white women working at Liddle & Carter in the late 1890s were Bohemian. Some of these women, like Rosie Pelikan, Mary Kratochvil, Augusta Pizinger, Pearl and Mary Langer, and Amelia and Mary Popelka, had recently emigrated from the historical region of Bohemia; others, like Frances Cerny, Kate Charipar, Stella Ripka, Julia and Mary Burianek, Emma and Mary Kozak, and Fanny and Annie Zastera, were the Iowa-born daughters of Bohemian immigrants.<sup>12</sup>

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8. Sharon E. Wood, *The Freedom of the Streets: Work, Citizenship, and Sexuality in a Gilded Age City* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2005), 9.

9. “Our Greatest Home Industry,” *Gazette*, 1/1/1901; “3,000 Barrel Mill,” *Gazette*, 10/18/1899; “History of Sinclair and Co.,” Bruce more Historic Site, [www.bruce more.org/history/people/sinclair/](http://www.bruce more.org/history/people/sinclair/).

10. *Census of Iowa for the Year 1915*, 233–36.

11. Bohemians constituted perhaps a quarter of the city’s population. See Pam Stek, “The 1898 American Cereal Company Strike in Cedar Rapids: Gender, Ethnicity, and Labor in Late Nineteenth-Century Iowa,” *Annals of Iowa* 74 (2015), 142–76 (immediately following this article).

12. Cedar Rapids City Directory (1898); Federal Census (1880, 1900, and 1910).

Native-born Americans originally from eastern and southern states also migrated to Cedar Rapids in significant numbers during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While many of the city's native-born whites were originally from places like New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Illinois, most of its African American residents had been born in the South. The end of slavery triggered a major northward migration of African Americans, with the Midwest being the region to which the majority of post-Civil War black migrants relocated.<sup>13</sup> Given that midwestern states—including Iowa—had restricted or barred black settlement in the antebellum era, the migration of the postwar era was a significant development.<sup>14</sup> According to historian Leslie Schwalm, more than 6,000 black migrants streamed into the upper midwestern states of Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin in the period from 1860 to 1870 alone. The vast majority settled in Iowa. Just over a thousand African Americans lived in the state in 1860; the federal census of 1870 reported 5,762 black residents. By the close of World War I, there were more than 19,000 black Iowans. Clearly, as historian Jack Blocker explains, the flood of the post-World War I Great Migration so well known to scholars and most Americans was “preceded by a half century trickle,” a slower but steady migration of African American from the South to the Midwest.<sup>15</sup>

That trend was clearly visible in Cedar Rapids. No African Americans were documented as living in Cedar Rapids prior to 1865, but by 1870 there were at least 50—and probably closer to

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13. Schwalm, *Emancipation's Diaspora*; Nell Irvin Painter, *Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas after Reconstruction* (New York, 1977); Jack Blocker, *A Little More Freedom: African Americans Enter the Urban Midwest, 1860-1930* (Columbus, OH, 2008); William C. Cohen, *At Freedom's Edge: Black Mobility and the Southern White Quest for Racial Control, 1861-1915* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1991); Michael P. Johnson, “Out of Egypt: The Migration of Former Slaves to the Midwest during the 1860s in Comparative Perspective,” in *Crossing Boundaries: Comparative History of Black People in Diaspora* (Bloomington, IN, 1999).

14. *Laws of Iowa, 1838-1839, 1840, 1850-1851*; Leola Nelson Bergmann, *The Negro in Iowa* (1948; reprint, Iowa City, 1969), 8-15; V. Jacque Voegeli, *Free but Not Equal: The Midwest and the Negro during the Civil War* (Chicago, 1967).

15. Schwalm, *Emancipation's Diaspora*, 45; Bergmann, *The Negro in Iowa*, 34; Blocker, *A Little More Freedom*, 219. See also James L. Hill, “Migration of Blacks to Iowa,” *Journal of Negro History* 66 (1981-1982), 289-303.

100—black residents of the city.<sup>16</sup> The black population grew steadily, with about 200 black residents by 1880, 300 by 1900, and close to 1,000 by 1915.<sup>17</sup>

Emma Oliphant's parents were among these early black settlers in Cedar Rapids. Thomas and Anna Oliphant had in all likelihood experienced slavery firsthand, as Thomas was born in Tennessee in the late 1830s and Anna in South Carolina in the 1850s.<sup>18</sup> It is unclear when Anna was liberated from bondage, but by 1864 at least Thomas Oliphant was no longer a slave and was living in the North. At that time, he enlisted in the 43rd U.S. Colored Infantry, which saw extensive action in the eastern theater during the last grueling phases of the Civil War.<sup>19</sup> At some point after he was mustered out of the army (at the rank of corporal), Oliphant made his way to Iowa. Thomas and Anna met either just before or just after arriving in Iowa; by 1870, they were married and living in the booming railroad town of Montana, Iowa, near the present-day city of Boone, just north of Ames and Des Moines.<sup>20</sup> There,

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16. Bergmann, *The Negro in Iowa*, 34; *The History of Linn County* (Chicago, 1878), as cited in Eric A. Smith, *Oak Hill: A Portrait of Black Life in Cedar Rapids, Iowa* (Los Angeles, 2006), 41; Willis Goudy, "Selected Demographics: Iowa's African-American Residents, 1840–2000," in *Outside In: African-American History in Iowa, 1838–2000*, ed. Bill Silag (Des Moines, 2001), 40–41; *Census of Iowa for the Year 1895* (Des Moines, 1896). My own tabulations from city directories, cemetery records, newspaper articles, and the federal census found at least 36 African Americans living in just Cedar Rapids (much less all of Linn County) in 1870. On census under-enumeration of African Americans, see Dernoral Davis, "Toward a Socio-Historical and Demographic Portrait of Twentieth-Century African-Americans," in *Black Exodus: The Great Migration from the American South*, ed. Alferdteen Harrison (Jackson, MS, 1991), 2–3.

17. "CRB," *Bystander*, 3/3/1899; "A Visit to the White City," *Bystander*, 4/2/1899; Goudy, "Selected Demographics," 41; *Census of Iowa for the Year 1895*, 127; Gabriel Victor Cools, "The Negro in Typical Communities of Iowa" (M.A. thesis, University of Iowa, 1918); Bergmann, *The Negro in Iowa*, 34.

18. Federal Census (1870). Gravestones in Oak Hill Cemetery, Cedar Rapids, list their birth years as 1838 and 1852.

19. National Park Service (NPS) database of Civil War soldiers, <http://www.nps.gov/civilwar/search-soldiers.htm>; NPS, "43rd Regiment, United States Colored Infantry," <http://www.nps.gov/civilwar/search-battle-units-detail.htm?battleUnitCode=UUS0043RI00C>; National African American Civil War Memorial list of soldiers, [http://www.nps.gov/civilwar/search-soldiers-detail.htm?soldier\\_id=ff663dc0-dc7a-df11-bf36-b8ac6f5d926a](http://www.nps.gov/civilwar/search-soldiers-detail.htm?soldier_id=ff663dc0-dc7a-df11-bf36-b8ac6f5d926a).

20. Federal Census (1870); Boone County Historical Society, "County History," <http://www.boonecounty.iowa.gov/index.aspx?page=282>.

they found jobs in a hotel, Thomas as a groom and Anna as a domestic servant. After that stint in Montana – where they were among less than a dozen black folk living in all of Boone County – Thomas and Anna decided to relocate to the larger city of Cedar Rapids.<sup>21</sup> By 1880, Thomas and Anna Oliphant were firmly established in Cedar Rapids, along with the four children they had welcomed since moving to Iowa: John, George, Emma, and Hellen.<sup>22</sup>

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Cedar Rapids looked like – and in many ways was – a good choice for black migrants like the Oliphants. In the late nineteenth century, African American newspapers often extolled the virtues of the great state of Iowa. The *Weekly Louisianan*, for example, explained that it was a place that offered “employment . . . both for men and women” where “the foundation of . . . riches and prosperity” might be laid for black men and women coming of age in the wake of slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction.<sup>23</sup>

Soon after arriving in Cedar Rapids, Thomas Oliphant found a job as a blacksmith while Anna “kept house” and looked after their growing family. The family settled in the Oak Hill neighborhood, a racially and ethnically diverse working-class neighborhood on the southeast side of Cedar Rapids. By the mid-1890s, the Oliphants were established in the house at 520 Tenth Avenue that they would live in for decades.<sup>24</sup> Just a few years after moving in, they managed to purchase this home free and clear of any

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21. Federal Census (1870); “African American Residents of Iowa’s Counties, 1840–1990,” *Outside In*, 40–41. Such movement from the South to rural and then urban areas in the Midwest was a typical migration pattern for many African Americans in the late nineteenth century. See Blocker, *A Little More Freedom*.

22. Federal Census (1880, 1900); Iowa State Census (1885); Oak Hill Cemetery gravestones. Additional children, including Florence, Grace, James, William, and Bessie, arrived after the move to Cedar Rapids. The 1900 census indicates that Anna had ten children, with six still living in 1900. Emma was listed in some records as “Mary Emma” or “Mary E” but always went by “Emma.”

23. “Colonization Schemes,” *Weekly (New Orleans) Louisianan*, 10/6/1877. See also “Our Colored Citizens,” *Huntsville (AL) Gazette*, 3/17/1888; and Schwalm, *Emancipation’s Diaspora*, 137.

24. Cedar Rapids City Directories (1890–1910); Federal Census (1900, 1910). On Oak Hill, see Cools, “The Negro in Typical Communities of Iowa,” 95–96; Smith, *Oak Hill*; and “African American Footprints of Cedar Rapids, Iowa,” <http://africanamericanfootprints.blogspot.com>.

mortgage—an accomplishment shared by many black migrants to the Midwest.<sup>25</sup>

Like the Oliphants, Bohemian immigrants Frank and Anna Popelka also saw Cedar Rapids as a promising place in which to raise a growing family. They, too, migrated to Cedar Rapids in the 1880s—in their case from Bohemia. The Popelkas also settled in Oak Hill and eventually purchased their home at 921 South Ninth Street, just a few blocks from the Oliphants. Frank Popelka found a job working at Sinclair & Company while Anna tended to the family's eleven children.<sup>26</sup> Many of the Popelka children, including Mary and Emma, attended Adams School alongside Emma Oliphant and her older brothers, John and George.<sup>27</sup> Schools in Cedar Rapids, like its residential neighborhoods, were racially and ethnically mixed.<sup>28</sup> Other black and Bohemian or Bohemian American girls, like Flora Bouey, Jessie Martin, Maggie Smith, and Annie and Mary Burianek, who would encounter each other a decade later at Liddle & Carter, also attended Adams School together and lived in Oak Hill.<sup>29</sup>

Cedar Rapids offered real opportunities in areas like education and home ownership. Still, newly relocated working-class families faced social and economic challenges. African Americans who had migrated from the South encountered different but still distinct discrimination in their new northern homes. They were still expected to occupy a subordinate “place” in northern society. Bohemian and other eastern European immigrants also encountered prejudice and discrimination, though their status as “conditionally” or “not quite white” generally put them in an elevated position in comparison to African Americans.<sup>30</sup>

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25. Blocker, *A Little More Freedom*, 49, 81. See also Janette Greenwood, *First Fruits of Freedom: The Migration of Former Slaves and their Search for Equality in Worcester, Massachusetts, 1862–1900* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2010), 148.

26. Federal Census (1900); Cedar Rapids City Directories (1895–1901).

27. “Our Schools,” *Gazette*, 9/29/1885.

28. Cools, “The Negro in Typical Communities of Iowa,” 95–96. Iowa law banned school segregation on the basis of race in 1868. *Clark v. Board of Directors*, 24 Iowa 266 (1868).

29. “Our Schools,” *Gazette*, 9/29/1885; Cedar Rapids City Directories (1885–1898).

30. See Karen Brodtkin, “Race and Gender in the Construction of Class,” *Science & Society* 60 (1996/97), 473. See also Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA, 1999);

Many black and Bohemian migrants to Cedar Rapids particularly struggled to secure gainful employment and earn a decent living. Both groups tended to be shunted into some of the least desirable positions. In Iowa, as in many other northern locales, “black men and women were concentrated at the bottom of the occupational ladder,” often specifically barred from many trades and industrial employment. The influx of European immigrants exacerbated this already precarious position. Even though blacks were “native-born Americans and English-speaking Protestants” and had more “favorable levels of educational attainment,” northern employers “preferred white foreign-born workers (most of them from southern and eastern Europe).” Black men employed as doormen, barbers, waiters, and cooks increasingly found themselves displaced by eastern European immigrant men, while “black women formed an ever larger proportion of laborers in the shrinking fields of hand laundry and personal service” because European “immigrant women continued to find expanded job opportunities in manufacturing.”<sup>31</sup>

The challenges of finding a decent job were compounded as the wages of most working-class men—even those who landed positions higher on the occupational ladder—consistently fell short of a living wage. Despite increasingly entrenched assumptions that only male heads of households were breadwinners, most working-class families in Cedar Rapids and elsewhere depended on the labor and income of wives and children.<sup>32</sup> For example, although Frank Popelka and Thomas Oliphant worked

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and David Roediger, *Working toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White* (New York, 2005).

31. Schwalm, *Emancipation's Diaspora*, 138; Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*, 153, 161, 154.

32. On the family wage ideal and perceptions of men as exclusive wage earners, see Jeanne Boydston, “To Earn Her Daily Bread: Housework and Antebellum Working-Class Subsistence,” *Radical History Review* 35 (1986), 7–25; idem, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic* (New York, 1994); Nan Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1999); Alice Kessler-Harris, *A Woman's Wage: Historical Meanings and Social Consequences* (Lexington, KY, 1991); idem, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (New York, 1982); Leslie Woodcock Tentler, *Wage-Earning Women: Industrial Work and Family Life in the United States, 1900–1930* (New York, 1979); Ava Baron, ed., *Work Engendered:*

hard to earn a living, their adolescent and adult children also had to labor to sustain the family. While Frank Popelka worked at Sinclair, his children also found employment: Frank Jr. as a tailor, Amelia and Mary as Liddle & Carter operatives, Edward as a compositor, Otilie as a servant, and Julia as a dressmaker's apprentice. In the Oliphant household, Thomas, John, George, and James worked as laborers, while Emma, Bessie, and Anna all worked at various times as domestic servants.<sup>33</sup>

WOMEN'S WAGES were vital to working-class households. The additional income Erie Wood earned by cooking and cleaning for a boarder, as well as her periodic work outside the home as a domestic "day laborer," provided critical economic support for the Wood family. Erie's husband, James, an ex-slave born in Virginia, worked hard as a laborer in Cedar Rapids, but the family needed additional income. James and Erie's 17-year-old daughter Pearl tried to contribute to the family's income by applying for a factory job at Liddle & Carter.<sup>34</sup> Several blocks down from the Popelka and Oliphant residences, the Bohemian immigrant Vejda family similarly relied on women's wages. After emigrating from Česká Třebová and settling in Cedar Rapids in the 1880s, head-of-household Kviryn Vejda was only intermittently employed. His Iowa-born daughter Mary remembered that the family constantly scraped by, always forgoing "extras" and most store-bought goods and making bed sheets and pillowcases "out of flour sacks."<sup>35</sup> Kviryn's eldest child, Fannie, who emigrated with her parents, started working outside the home by the time she was 15. After toiling for two years as a domestic servant, Fan-

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*Toward a New History of American Labor* (Ithaca, NY, 1991); Laura Tabili, "Dislodging the Center/Complicating the Dialectic: What Gender and Race Have Done to the Study of Labor," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 63 (2003), 14-20.

33. Cedar Rapids City Directories (1896-1898); Federal Census (1880, 1900, 1910); "CRB," *Bystander*, 4/28/1899; "Look! Second Special Announcement about the Gazette's 20th Century Directory," *Gazette*, 11/11/1899.

34. Iowa State Census (1885); Federal Census (1900); "Jackson School," *Gazette*, 4/24/1895.

35. "Hemmer Autobiographies," Linn County Historical Society Library and Archives; Federal Census (1900, 1910, 1920).

nie found a position in the wrapping department of the American Cereal factory in Cedar Rapids, where dozens of immigrant and first-generation women were employed. After a few years working as a “wrapper,” Fannie took a job as a laundress at the Parlor City commercial laundry. When she married and left the Vejda household in 1903, her younger sister Mary went to work at a garment factory and gave two-thirds of her weekly earnings to her parents. After her marriage, Fannie continued to work at Parlor City to supplement her husband’s income as a railroad car repairman and then a Sinclair employee; by 1910, she was bringing in income by taking in “washing at home” while taking care of her two small children.<sup>36</sup>

Fannie and Mary Vejda, Erie and Pearl Wood, Emma Oliphant, and Amelia, Mary, Emma, Otilie, and Julia Popelka were among the millions of women in America who were part of the paid labor force in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1890 nearly 20 percent of all women in the United States labored outside the home for wages.<sup>37</sup> Those working women were often women of color, whose labor force participation was not a new phenomenon, and young immigrant and native-born women of European descent, who were entering the labor force in unprecedented numbers.<sup>38</sup>

In Cedar Rapids, women constituted at least one-fifth of all paid laborers working outside the home around 1900.<sup>39</sup> An 1898 Cedar Rapids city directory lists nearly 2,000 working women — a sample large enough to map overall patterns in women’s employment yet specific enough to allow us to trace the working lives of many individual women. And because this directory was

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36. “Hemmer Autobiographies”; Federal Census (1900, 1910); “Marriages,” *Gazette*, 9/8/1903; “Man Seriously Injured,” *Gazette*, 12/23/1919; “Beauty Winners,” *Gazette*, 9/23/1921; Iowa State Census (1925); Cedar Rapids City Directories (1890–1905).

37. Claudia Goldin, “Female Labor Force Participation: The Origin of Black and White Difference, 1870 and 1880,” *Journal of Economic History* 37 (1977), 87. See also Joseph A. Hill, *Women in Gainful Occupations, 1870–1920*, Census Monographs 9 (Washington, DC, 1929), 15, 54; and Lynn Weiner, *From Working Girl to Working Mother: The Female Labor Force in the United States, 1820–1980* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1985), 4.

38. Goldin, “Female Labor Force Participation,” 87.

39. *Census for the State of Iowa* (Des Moines, 1905), 604, 216–17.

produced within just months of the action at Liddle & Carter and other important women's labor protests in Cedar Rapids, it offers a window into the lives of the specific women involved in those protests.<sup>40</sup>

A few women in Cedar Rapids worked in professional jobs because they wanted to, but the vast majority worked because they had to. They were most often young and unmarried, although plenty of older and married, divorced, or widowed women were also paid laborers. Their employment options were circumscribed by gender – with women being hired for needle, laundry, restaurant, clerical, retail, domestic, and certain kinds of factory work – and then further delineated by race and ethnicity. For example, the 1898 directory sample shows that close to 20 percent of all working women in Cedar Rapids worked in retail, clerical, and secretarial jobs, where white European immigrant and Euro-

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40. Help wanted ads and city directories provide extensive information about women's work. Directories offer a particular wealth of information since they were produced annually or biennially and listed the residential address and specific employer and/or occupation of most working-age residents of Cedar Rapids. Because women's work was often overlooked by census takers and often occurred during shorter windows of time than might be captured by decennial censuses, directories allow historians to identify and track women's working lives in a unique way. I accessed the *Evening Gazette's Free City Directory of Cedar Rapids, Iowa* (Cedar Rapids, May 1898) (hereafter cited as *City Directory, 1898*) at <http://mpl.newspaperarchive.com> and then identified all women in the 300-page directory who listed an occupation or employer, a total of 1,888 entries. I then created a database and entered each woman's name, address, occupation, and employer, which allowed me to search, sort, and look for patterns in the data. I was thus able to calculate percentages of women working for particular employers and in various occupations. As research progressed, I added information from other sources (censuses, newspaper articles, and other directories) to this database, adding fields such as race, ethnicity, birthplace, parent's birthplace, age, and marital status. My database findings are subsequently cited as "1898 City Directory Sample and Database." The 1898 directory is also the best available source for identifying the specific women involved in labor protests at Liddle & Carter and American Cereal in the late 1890s. Because the directory was produced within just months of those actions, it is highly likely that the women listed as working there in the May 1898 directory were also working there during the protests of 1897 and 1898. Newspaper articles, censuses, and other city directories corroborate this for certain women. Since only a handful of women were specifically named in news coverage of the protests, the May 1898 directory sample allows us to identify with confidence, if not absolute certainty, specific women as well as broad characteristics of the groups of women working at Liddle & Carter and American Cereal during the protests of 1897–1898.

American women held sway. Similarly, despite black women's long tradition of working in sewing and dressmaking trades, women of European descent predominated among the hundreds of women from the 1898 sample who were engaged as dressmakers, seamstresses, milliners, milliners' assistants, and hat trimmers.<sup>41</sup>

Women working in dining establishments and commercial laundries in Cedar Rapids came from somewhat more diverse backgrounds. Several women—among the 60 total in the sample who cooked and served meals in the city's hotels, restaurants, and lunch stands—worked at Marshall's Restaurant. That restaurant, an institution in downtown Cedar Rapids for more than 40 years, was operated by Marshall Perkins, an African American man, and his German immigrant wife, Louisa. The Perkinses employed black and white men and women as cooks and servers.<sup>42</sup>

Black and white women also worked side by side in commercial laundries in Cedar Rapids, including Parlor City, New Process, Buck's, and Cascade. In total, about 3 percent of all working women in the 1898 sample were engaged in some form of laundry work, with most working for the commercial laundries that had become ubiquitous in urban areas by the 1890s and early 1900s.<sup>43</sup>

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41. "1898 City Directory Sample and Database." Professional jobs (teachers, nurses, journalists, physicians, and dentists) constituted 13 percent of the sample (244/1,888). Retail, clerical, and secretarial jobs (e.g., clerks, cashiers, bookkeepers, copyists, secretaries, stenographers, telephone operators, etc.) constituted 18 percent of the sample (331/1,888). On exclusion of black women from these positions nationally and in Iowa, see Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*, 178; and Sally Stevens Cotton, "*The Iowa Bystander: A History of the First 25 Years*" (M.A. thesis, Iowa State University, 1983), 56. On black women in sewing trades, see Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, "Survival Strategies among African-American Women Workers: A Continuing Process," in *Women, Work, and Protest: A Century of US Women's Labor History*, ed. Ruth Milkman (Boston, 1985), 148. Dressmakers, seamstresses, milliners, etc., represented 11 percent of the sample (215/1,888).

42. "1898 City Directory Sample and Database" (restaurant workers totaled 4 percent of the sample [69/1,888]); Jack Lufkin, "'Higher Expectations for Ourselves': African-Americans in Iowa's Business World," in *Outside In*, 202-3; "Group portrait . . . outside of [Marshall Perkins's] Lunch Room Restaurant," Collections of the African American Museum of Iowa (AAMI), Cedar Rapids; Cedar Rapids City Directories (1890-1910); Federal Census (1880, 1900, 1910, 1920).

43. "1898 City Directory Sample and Database." Laundry workers totaled 60/1,888, with most (47/60) working in commercial laundries. See also "Laundry-Dry Cleaners" folder, Linn County Historical Society Library and Archives. On black women in and the often integrated nature of laundry work, see Goldin,

For instance, German American sisters Minnie and Lizzie Sallach and Afro-Canadian immigrant Sarah Bouey all worked at New Process during the same period in the late 1890s.<sup>44</sup> Commercial laundry work was hot, damp, and physically demanding; a *Des Moines News* article explained that it often led to a “life of aches” and ailments for women workers.<sup>45</sup>

Even so, many women found laundry work preferable to the primary alternative of domestic service, as it offered somewhat more autonomy and the opportunity to work alongside female friends or family members. At New Process, sisters Minnie and Lizzie Sallach worked with each other, as did mother and daughter Sarah Flora Bouey. The Bouey women went out to work following the death of their husband/father William in 1892. Initially, only Sarah worked at New Process, while 19-year-old Flora and her 12-year-old brother Edmund supplemented their mother’s income by teaching music lessons and delivering newspapers. By 1897, however, Sarah and the children were struggling to get by, perhaps in part because black laundresses were paid less than white ones.<sup>46</sup>

Even if Sarah Bouey was paid the same wages as the Sallach sisters, her family would have found it nearly impossible to get by exclusively on the wages of one working woman. According to government reports, annual earnings for men in midwestern cities around 1890 averaged between \$560 and \$630, while women’s averaged between \$200 and \$330. In 1900, the median national weekly wage for men was \$10.55 (close to \$550 per year, if one worked steadily all year) while women’s was \$5.64 (around \$290

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“Female Labor Force Participation,” 96-97; Carter Woodson, “The Negro Washerwoman,” *Journal of Negro History* 25 (1930), 269-77; Elizabeth Haiken, “The Lord Helps Those Who Help Themselves: Black Laundresses in Little Rock, Arkansas, 1917-1921,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 49 (1990), 20-50.

44. Federal Census (1900, 1910); “Last Installment of Names for the Gazette’s 20th Century Directory,” *Gazette*, 11/18/1899; Cedar Rapids City Directories (1896, 1907).

45. “Women Laundry Workers Lead Life of Aches,” *Des Moines News*, 10/11/1916; Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*, 178.

46. Federal Census (1880, 1900, 1910); Cedar Rapids City Directories (1892-1898, 1900, 1907); “Free Directory of Cedar Rapids, Marion, and Kenwood,” *Gazette*, 10/22/1896; Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*, 178; Haiken, “The Lord Helps Those Who Help Themselves,” 33.



*Marshall and Louisa Perkins (center, in doorway) are pictured with their children and staff, circa 1900, in front of Marshall's Restaurant, one of the few racially integrated workplaces in turn-of-the-century Cedar Rapids. From the collection of the African American Museum of Iowa, Gift of Harriet Perkins.*

for the year). From the 1890s to 1910s, most working women in Cedar Rapids earned even less than that, typically pulling in just \$2 to \$5 a week, or about \$100 to \$250 per year. Yet, around the turn of the century, “an annual salary of \$800 was considered the minimum necessary for survival for a family of four.”<sup>47</sup> Sarah

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47. Elyce J. Rotella, *From Home to Office: U.S. Women at Work, 1870–1930* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1981), table B.1; Edith Abbott, *Women in Industry: A Study in American Economic History* (New York, 1910), 312; “Condition of Labor,” *Gazette*, 9/27/1894; Mary Allison Farley, “Iowa Women in the Workplace,” *Palimpsest* 67 (1986), 11; “Servant Girls,” *Gazette*, 5/8/1890; “Still Out,” *Gazette*, 10/24/1898;

Bouey's New Process wages surely would have fallen well short of that cost of living, which likely factored in Flora's decision to set aside her aspirations to be a musician and find a job that was more lucrative than the occasional music lesson. Although she was a "talented" piano player and a "student of the conservatory of music," Flora attempted to get a job at Liddle & Carter in 1897 and ultimately went to work alongside her mother at New Process.<sup>48</sup>

Laundry work was grueling, but still many women preferred it to domestic service – the most common occupation for women in turn-of-the-century Cedar Rapids. Nearly 500 women in the 1898 sample – at least a quarter of all women working outside the home in the city – were employed as domestic servants.<sup>49</sup> Nationally, the percentage was even higher; in 1900, about a third of all working women were domestics. Government reports noted that between 1880 and 1920 domestic service "steadily [lost] ground in its relative importance as an occupation for [white] women." The movement of native-born and immigrant white women into clerical, sales, and manufacturing jobs "left an increasing proportion of black women to scrub floors, make beds, and cook meals for employers." In the South, domestic positions were occupied exclusively by black women. In the Midwest, Scandinavian and central European women tended to predominate, although plenty of Irish and African American women also worked as domestics.<sup>50</sup> Emma Oliphant and other black women in Cedar Rapids tended to only find positions as domes-

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Mary Vejda record in Iowa State Census (1915); Nancy J. Barrett, "The Struggles of Women Industrial Workers to Improve Work Conditions in the Progressive Era," *OAH Magazine of History* 13 (1999), 43.

48. "Session Closed. Conference of St. Paul District A.M.E. Churches," *Gazette*, 5/20/1897; Cedar Rapids City Directory (1900); Federal Census (1900).

49. "1898 City Directory Sample and Database." Of the sample, 472/1,888 women (25 percent) were "domestics." If we include all cleaning and domestic-type work (e.g., maid, housekeeper, janitress), the figure rises to 523/1,888 (28 percent).

50. Hill, *Women in Gainful Occupations*, 36; Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*, 132; Stephen Gross, "Domestic Labor as a Life-Course Event: The Effects of Ethnicity in Turn-of-the-Century America," *Social Science History* 15 (1991), 409. On northern black women and domestic work, see Schwalm, *Emancipation's Diaspora*, 138–40; Ralph Scharnau, "African-American Wage Earners in Iowa, 1850–1950," in *Outside In*, 217–18, 237; Kathryn M. Neal, "Unsung Heroines: African-American Women in Iowa," in *Outside In*, 367; and Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*, 164.

tics. Oliphant's first documented job outside the home was as a "domestic," and she, like many working-class women in Cedar Rapids, jumped from one domestic job to another.<sup>51</sup> Domestic jobs were always easy to come by, but low pay and high expectations led to tremendous turnover. As a *Gazette* article observed, employers "routinely find fault, follow their servant in their work and are never satisfied." "If a girl can secure any other employment, even if the remuneration is less," the article concluded, "she will accept it in preference to domestic duties."<sup>52</sup>

FACTORY WORK offered an appealing alternative to domestic service. About 15 percent of all working women in the 1898 sample, second only to domestic service, worked in the city's factories, most notably Cedar Rapids Box Company, Cedar Rapids Candy Company, National Cracker Company, Sinclair & Company, farm equipment manufacturer J. G. Cherry Company, American Cereal, and Liddle & Carter. The majority worked as wrappers at American Cereal or as garment workers at Liddle & Carter.<sup>53</sup>

For those who could secure them, factory jobs were among the best jobs available to working-class women, offering some of the highest wages. As a *Gazette* article explained, "girls" working in factories and other "occupations more congenial" typically earned "more than [the] \$1 or \$2 a week" paid to domestic servants. According to one historian's estimate, female factory workers in the Midwest could earn an average of about \$5 per week. In the late 1890s, wrappers at American Cereal earned 14 cents for every 100 packages of cereal they wrapped, which theoretically made it possible to earn as much as \$1.40 per day (\$6 to \$8 per week); yet, as one worker explained, "even the best and most

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51. Cedar Rapids City Directories (1896–1901); Federal Census (1900).

52. "Servant Girls," *Gazette*, 5/8/1890.

53. "1898 City Directory Sample and Database" (289/1,888). This figure would be even higher (308/1,888) if we included women in the printing industry. Liddle & Carter was listed as the employer of 53 women in the sample — two of whom were "bookkeepers" (and thus excluded from the industrial workers tally). That number aligns closely with the reference to "seventy skilled employees" in newspaper coverage of the color line confrontation. The directory listed 119 women working at American Cereal. Removing a few duplicate names and clerical or other non-manufacturing positions left about 110 women working as wrappers.

industrious of us wrappers are not making much more than \$2 a week on average."<sup>54</sup>

Garment factories offered similar wages, with entry-level operatives at Liddle & Carter earning perhaps \$2 to \$4 per week in the 1890s, with a few experienced seamstresses making two or three times that.<sup>55</sup> However, the seasonal nature of the garment industry meant that workers were routinely laid off for weeks and months at a time.<sup>56</sup> For example, when federal census takers knocked on the door of the Popelkas' residence in June 1900, Amelia—a garment worker at the Liddle & Carter "overall fct"—had already been out of work for three months of the year; Amelia's coworker Emma Kozak, who "makes overalls" at Liddle & Carter, had not worked at all. Kozak and Popelka, along with other Cedar Rapids garment workers like Mary Vejda and sisters Pearl, Mary, and Agnes Langer, were all laid off on numerous occasions and for months at a time. After layoffs and slow periods are considered, a typical female garment factory worker in Cedar Rapids in the 1910s earned just \$250 per year—nowhere close to the cost of living at the time.<sup>57</sup>

Even so, factory jobs were among the highest-paying and most desirable jobs for working-class women in Cedar Rapids. They were harder to come by in the first place, with fewer positions available compared to domestic service and laundry work,

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54. "Servant Girls," *Gazette*, 5/8/1890; Kyle E. Ciani, "Hidden Laborers: Female Day Workers in Detroit, 1870–1920," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 4 (2005), 23–24, 33; "Still Out," *Gazette*, 10/24/1898.

55. Based on figures reported by female operatives working in Cedar Rapids garment factories, circa 1910–1920. In 1912 most women earned \$3 to \$6 per week while experienced seamstresses made as much as \$10 to \$15 per week. In 1920 entry-level workers at Welch-Cook made \$6 per week. "Hemmer Autobiographies." See also Farley, "Iowa Women in the Workplace"; and Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*, 167.

56. Busy seasons fell in the spring and late summer–fall, precisely the time when Liddle & Carter repeatedly advertised for operatives in August 1897. During other parts of the year, "virtually no work was available." Roger Waldinger, "Another look at the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union: Women, Industry Structure and Collective Action," in *Women, Work, and Protest*, 92.

57. Federal Census (1900); Cedar Rapids City Directory (1903); Iowa State Census (1905); Mary Vejda record in Iowa State Census (1915); "Hemmer Autobiographies"; Abbott, *Women in Industry*, 312; Weiner, *From Working Girl to Working Mother*, 25.

and turnover less common.<sup>58</sup> Most of the wrappers at American Cereal and the female operatives at the Liddle & Carter and Welch-Cook garment factories worked there for years. When factory women did seek out a new job, they tended to move to another factory job rather than returning to domestic service. Fannie Vejda was just one of many wrappers who abandoned domestic service in order to take a job at American Cereal. Seventeen-year-old Bohemian immigrant Agnes Langer moved between jobs in at least three different Cedar Rapids factories within the space of less than a year rather than return to domestic service. After landing the job at American Cereal, Agnes continued to work as a wrapper for several years. Agnes's older sister Pearl also jumped between factory jobs. After working at Liddle & Carter for years, Pearl, by 1900, had moved 60 miles north to Cedar Falls to take a position as an "operator in overhaul [*sic*] fcty" in that city.<sup>59</sup>

Female factory workers in Cedar Rapids came from similar ethnic and racial backgrounds. More than 80 percent of the wrappers at American Cereal in 1898 and close to 90 percent of the female operatives at Liddle & Carter were European immigrants or the daughters of European immigrants—a figure that corresponds to the findings of historians looking at other cities.<sup>60</sup> In

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58. Based on a survey of all *Gazette* want ads for women's jobs published on one day in each of six months (January, March, May, July, September, and November) in 1888, 1898, 1908, and 1918. Domestic jobs were the most commonly advertised job in each of those months and years.

59. Cedar Rapids City Directories (1898-1903); Federal Census (1900).

60. "1898 City Directory Sample and Database." Of the 110 American Cereal wrappers, I was able to definitively document the birthplaces of 79 women and their parents. Of the 79, 19 (24 percent) were immigrants, 45 (57 percent) were the daughters of immigrants, and 15 (19 percent) were native born to native-born parents. The birthplaces and parents' birthplaces of 40 of the 51 female operatives at Liddle & Carter could be determined. Of the 40, 9 (22.5 percent) were immigrants, 26 (65 percent) were the daughters of immigrants, and 5 (12.5 percent) were native born to native-born parents. Nationally, about 75 percent of all female factory workers at the end of the nineteenth century were foreign born or the daughters of foreign-born immigrants. Barrett, "The Struggles of Women Industrial Workers," 43. One study of garment workers in Chicago found that 65 percent were foreign born and another 32 percent were first-generation immigrants. N. Sue Weiler, "The Uprising in Chicago: The Men's Garment Workers Strike, 1910-1911," in *A Needle, A Bobbin, A Strike: Women Needleworkers in America*, ed. Joan M. Jensen and Sue Davison (Philadelphia, 1984), 117.

particular, a quarter of the female workers at American Cereal and Liddle & Carter were European immigrants. About another 60 percent at each factory had been born in the United States to parents who had recently emigrated from places like Germany, Ireland, and especially Bohemia. Indeed, 60 percent of the wrappers and 75 percent of the Liddle & Carter operatives came from a Bohemian background.<sup>61</sup>

While Bohemian women predominated, African American women were excluded from industrial jobs. No black women in the 1898 sample were employed in Cedar Rapids factories. Nationally, "less than three percent of all black working women were engaged in manufacturing" in 1900, as "compared with 21 percent of foreign-born and 38 percent of native-born white working women."<sup>62</sup> In the 1890s, the color line in women's factory work was clear—a fact women like Emma Oliphant sought to change.

THE DECISION to attempt to break the color line at Liddle & Carter was first sparked by the women's desires to materially improve their families' incomes and economic positions. The lack of decent employment options for black women was a major concern for the women, just as it was for more prominent black activists in the 1890s. In an address at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, Fannie Barrier Williams explained that "except teaching in colored schools and menial work, colored women can find no employment in this free America." Closer to home, a major focus of the editorial coverage of the *Iowa State Bystander*—the state's leading African American newspaper—in the mid-1890s was "the lack of diversification of jobs for

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61. "1898 City Directory Sample and Database." On Bohemians in the garment industry, see Weiler, "The Uprising in Chicago," 117–18, 134.

62. Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*, 166. On the exclusion of blacks in manufacturing, see Terborg-Penn, "Survival Strategies," 147; Joe Trotter Jr., "African Americans and the Industrial Revolution," *OAH Magazine of History* 15 (2000), 19–23; Larry J. Griffin and Robert R. Korstad, "Class as Race and Gender: Making and Breaking a Labor Union in the Jim Crow South," *Social Science History* 19 (1995), 425–54; Kimberley Phillips, "'But It Is a Fine Place to Make Money': Migration and African-American Families in Cleveland, 1915–1929," *Journal of Social History* 30 (1996), 393–413.

black people”; black women “had received good educations,” its editors noted, but “never seemed to have a chance for a job.”<sup>63</sup>

All of the black women who applied at Liddle & Carter could have benefited substantially from increased income. Peal Wood and Jessie Martin were young women in their teens who worked outside the home to supplement the income of households that always seemed to struggle to get by.<sup>64</sup> By the summer of 1897, many of the women had new and pressing economic concerns. The Oliphant family experienced significant upheavals in the mid-1890s when Thomas became an invalid. Although Anna received a modest Civil War veteran’s widow’s pension after Thomas’s death in 1896, that was not enough to support the family.<sup>65</sup> After 1896, the Oliphant children’s income became even more critical; John, George, and Emma – along with their mother, Anna – all had to work outside the home in order to make ends meet. By the summer of 1897, when Emma decided to apply at Liddle & Carter, the family’s struggles undoubtedly would have been on her mind.

By the late 1890s, Mattie Price, Sarah and Flora Bouey, and Mary Bowlin were also dealing with the loss of their primary male breadwinners. Households that suffered the loss of a husband and father to death, divorce, or abandonment were particularly vulnerable to economic hardship. In the 1880s and early 1890s, Mattie Price was married to a successful barber and spent her days “keeping house” and looking after the couple’s two children.<sup>66</sup>

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63. Fannie Barrier Williams, as quoted in Shirley Wilson Logan, “What Are We Worth: Anna Julia Cooper Defines Black Women’s Work at the Dawn of the Twentieth Century,” in *Sister Circle: Black Women and Work*, ed. Sharon Harley et al. (New Brunswick, NJ, 2002), 157; Cotton, “*The Iowa Bystander*,” 56.

64. Cedar Rapids City Directories (1895–1900); Federal Census (1880, 1900, 1910).

65. “Civil War Pension Index” (accessed via ancestry.com); Federal Census (1900); “Soldier Dead of Two Wars in Linwood, Kenwood, and Oak Hill,” *Gazette*, 5/27/1899.

66. The exact identity of the “Mattie Price” listed as one of the seven African American women who sought to work at Liddle & Carter has been difficult to confirm definitively, but most evidence suggests that she was Mrs. Mattie Price, wife of barber Richard Price, who often associated with Mattie Wade and other women involved in the protest, as indicated in the *Iowa State Bystander*’s “CRB” columns in the 1890s. “Mrs Mattie Price, wid Richard” continues to appear in Cedar Rapids directories until the 1910s. Cedar Rapids City Directories (1890–1910); Federal Census (1880). It is possible that the “Mattie Price” listed in the

By 1896, however, she was a widow with two teenaged children and on her own financially, which means she may have needed to work for wages. Sarah and Flora Bouey certainly understood that situation, as did their New Process coworkers the Sallach sisters—who offer an instructive example of how financially difficult things could be for female-headed households. German immigrant and recent widow Elizabeth Sallach relied on the wages of her four working daughters: Lizzie and Minnie, who worked at New Process; Emma, who worked at Buck's Laundry; and Mary, who worked as a housekeeper. With the combined wages of the four young women working full time, the Sallachs probably managed to get by on \$15 per week—about what one working-class man made.<sup>67</sup> Mary Bowlin, a friend of the Bouey women, also unexpectedly became responsible for supporting her family. Mary first moved to Cedar Rapids in the early 1880s to be with her newly married older sister, Hattie Raspberry. A few years later, Mary married Walter Bowlin, a barber from a well-established black family in Cedar Rapids. When the couple's strained relationship ended by 1889, Mary had to support herself and young Walter Jr., born in 1886. For at least the next five years she worked as a domestic. Several of these positions were live-in domestic jobs, which may have offered Mary steadier and better-paying work than day labor but surely impinged on her time with her own family. By 1897, she must have relished the prospect of better wages, more preferable hours, and the possibility of living at home with her son that a factory job at Liddle & Carter offered.<sup>68</sup>

Mattie Wade, Mary Bowlin's friend and Sarah Bouey's immediate neighbor, also seems to have had concerns about supporting

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1897 Liddle & Carter articles was "Minnie Price," who would have been about 17 at the time of the protest, or "Attie" (or "Addie") Price, who was in her late teens in the 1890s and friends with Emma Oliphant. Cedar Rapids City Directories (1890-1910); Iowa State Census (1885); Federal Census (1900); "CRB," *By-stander*, 6/18/1897, 12/23/1898, 12/22/1899.

67. Federal Census (1900); "Last Installment of Names for . . . Directory," *Gazette*, 11/18/1899.

68. "Walter H. Bowlin Married," *Gazette*, 6/24/1885; "Marriages, Births and Deaths," *Gazette*, 7/27/1886; "Inhuman Beings: The Dastardly Treatment Administered to a Little Colored Boy," *Gazette*, 1/7/1889; Cedar Rapids City Directories (1895, 1896, 1898, 1900, 1906); Federal Census (1900). Mary's last name was sometimes spelled "Bowling" in these records.

her family. In the 1890s, Wade was a married mother of four who was never documented in census or directory records as working outside the home. Unlike in the South, where the vast majority of black women, married as well as single, were employed, very few married black women in Cedar Rapids worked outside the home.<sup>69</sup> And yet Mattie Wade was among the seven women who sought a job at Liddle & Carter in 1897, perhaps due to changes in her husband George's occupation from "reverend" to "laborer" and "janitor." The Wades had no children of working age who could add to the family earnings, and Mattie was occupied with having and raising children. By 1897, however, their eldest child would have been almost 13 and the youngest 3, which might have made it possible for Mattie to consider going out to work.<sup>70</sup>

WHILE the women's decisions to apply at Liddle & Carter were motivated by real economic concerns, they were also very consciously protesting racial discrimination. As Jacqueline Jones observes, black men and women "tended to understand, in a way their white counterparts did not, that 'racial' injustice was inextricably linked to economic injustice." "Civil rights struggles," adds historian Kevin Gaines, "are seldom just about race but invariably involve class" – and, we should add, gender "identities and conflicts."<sup>71</sup>

The seven protesting women lived within blocks of each other in Oak Hill in the late 1890s, knew each other well, and had some experience with collective activism prior to August 1897.<sup>72</sup>

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69. Victoria Wolcott, *Remaking Respectability: African American Women in Interwar Detroit* (Chapel Hill, 2001), 23.

70. Federal Census (1900); Cedar Rapids City Directories (1895–1898); "Last Installment of Names for . . . Directory," *Gazette*, 11/18/1899.

71. Jones, "Race and Gender in Modern America," *Reviews in American History* 26 (1998), 230; Kevin Gaines, "Rethinking Race and Class in African-American Struggles for Equality, 1885–1941," *American Historical Review* 102 (1997), 381.

72. I also suspect, but have not been able to definitely prove, that Flora Bouey and Pearl Wood were relatives. The Wood and Bouey families often lived at the same residences in the years surrounding the turn of the century, sharing or alternating residences at 1015 10th Avenue and 1729 South 8th Street. Sarah Bouey and Erie Wood were also both born in Canada, which may indicate that they were sisters. Federal Census (1900, 1910); Cedar Rapids City Directories (1895–1905).



Many African American women in turn-of-the-century Cedar Rapids were actively involved in black churches, including Bethel AME and Mt. Zion Baptist churches. From the collection of the African American Museum of Iowa, Gift of Connie Hillsman.

The women spent time together over the course of several years socializing and participating in the same clubs, churches, activities, and hobbies. Their social lives were extensively chronicled in the *Bystander*, probably because Mattie Wade produced the “Cedar Rapids Budgetarian” column that reported the activities of black men and women in the city.<sup>73</sup> Oliphant, Wade, Bouey, Bowlin, and Martin were all active in the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in Cedar Rapids.<sup>74</sup> Their work in the church probably gave the women their first experiences with activism and organizing. Black churches in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries served not only as important religious ref-

73. “CRB,” *Bystander*, 12/23/1898, 6/18/1897, 12/22/1899, 5/5/1899, 6/29/1900; “Correspondents and Agents,” *Bystander*, 6/28/1895.

74. “Colored Endeavors,” *Gazette*, 6/3/1897; “CRB,” *Bystander*, 11/26/1897, 12/10/1897, 12/17/1897, 3/3/1899, 4/28/1899, 8/10/1900; “Session Closed. Conference of St. Paul District A.M.E. Churches,” *Gazette*, 5/20/1897. On the history of the church, see Schwalm, *Emancipation’s Diaspora*, 144; Frances E. Hawthorne, “The Church,” in *Outside In*, 391; and Marlee Jessop, “Iowa’s Black Churches,” [www.blackiowa.org/education/black-history-moments/iowas-black-churches](http://www.blackiowa.org/education/black-history-moments/iowas-black-churches).

uges but were critical in fostering community bonds, black social assistance programs, and civil rights activism.<sup>75</sup> Some scholars have even identified important connections between black churches and women's labor activism.<sup>76</sup>

Most of the Liddle & Carter women socialized together and were involved in the same events and activities. Emma Oliphant, Flora Bouey, Mattie Wade, and Jessie Martin particularly spent a lot of time together. They went on picnics, attended luncheons and barbecues, threw surprise parties for each other, hosted fashionable "early Sunday morning breakfasts," enjoyed dinners, "games and social chats" in each other's homes, and "attended the opera" in downtown Cedar Rapids.<sup>77</sup> Wade and Bouey enjoyed acting together in theatrical productions; Wade, Bouey, and Oliphant shared a love of music; and Wade and Bowlin took art lessons together.<sup>78</sup>

The women also participated in clubs and societies, the importance of which has been widely documented by historians.<sup>79</sup>

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75. Hawthorne, "The Church," 387–401; Andrew Billingsley, *Mighty Like a River: The Black Church and Social Reform* (New York, 1999); C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, NC, 1990); R. Drew Smith, *From Every Mountainside: Black Churches and the Broad Terrain of Civil Rights* (Albany, NY, 2013).

76. Mary Frederickson, "I Know Which Side I'm On': Southern Women in the Labor Movement in the Twentieth Century," in *Women, Work, and Protest*, 163; Terborg-Penn, "Survival Strategies," 143–44.

77. "CRB," *Bystander*, 5/14/1897, 5/12/1899, 7/6/1900, 12/30/1898, 6/18/1897, 12/17/1897, 7/30/1897, 4/29/1898, 9/2/1898, 9/10/1897, 5/5/1899, 12/22/1899, 8/10/1900, 9/12/1897; "In Matrimonial Bonds," *Cedar Rapids Republican* (hereafter cited as *Republican*), 11/21/1901; "Iowa Federation in Session Here; Colored Women's Club Representatives Convene," *Gazette*, 5/23/1904.

78. "Colored Endeavors," *Gazette*, 6/3/1897; "Story of the Nile: The Long Expected Egypta on the Stage," *Gazette*, 11/27/1894; "CRB," *Bystander*, 11/26/1897, 3/3/1899, 4/28/1899, 8/10/1900.

79. Schwalm, *Emancipation's Diaspora*, 197–200; Neal, "Unsung Heroines," 368–70; Anne Beiser Allen, "Sowing the Seeds of Kindness and Change: A History of the Iowa Association of Colored Women's Clubs," *Iowa Heritage Illustrated* 83 (2002), 2–13; Richard Breaux, "'Maintaining a Home for Girls': The Iowa Federation of Colored Women's Clubs at the University of Iowa, 1919–1950," *Journal of African American History* 87 (2002), 236–56; Anne Meis Knupfer, *Toward a Tenderer Humanity and a Nobler Womanhood: African American Women's Clubs in Turn-of-the-Century Chicago* (New York, 1996); Elizabeth Lindsay Davis, *Lifting as They Climb* (New York, 1996); Wanda A. Hendricks, *Gender, Race, and Politics in the Midwest: Black Club Women in Illinois* (Bloomington, IN, 1998); White, *Too Heavy a Load*.

The *Bystander* recorded these activities and, although the city's white-run newspapers rarely covered the activities of black people, the *Gazette* noted that Emma Oliphant had helped to organize many societies aimed at doing "much good" in the community.<sup>80</sup> Wade, Martin, Oliphant, and other members of the black community regularly attended club and society meetings in each other's homes. The Ladies Industrial Circle, for example, was described as "doing grand work," which seems to have included everything from "programs" to fishing to quilting. Many of the women were also members of the Light House Society, a mixed-gender group that prepared "excellent programmes" consisting of "readings, papers, and discussion" on current events, literature, and history—some of which focused on black history and political issues.<sup>81</sup>

Notably, some of these women and their families were also involved with annual Emancipation Day celebrations in turn-of-the-century Cedar Rapids.<sup>82</sup> The celebrations were organized by those with personal connections to slavery and black military service in the Union Army during the Civil War. Immediate connections to slavery could be found among the families of most black residents of Cedar Rapids, including the Oliphants, Boueys, Woods, Martins, and Bowlin/Raspberrys.<sup>83</sup> Organizing and attending Emancipation Day celebrations honored that history. The events also reminded whites living in the age of Jim Crow of the important roles African Americans played during the Civil War, the true meaning of that war as being about abolition and freedom, and the patriotism and citizenship of black people.<sup>84</sup>

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80. "Colored Endeavors," *Gazette*, 6/3/1897.

81. "CRB," *Bystander*, 3/26/1897, 4/29/1898, 8/19/1898, 7/23/1897, 7/30/1897, 12/17/1897, 9/9/1898, 11/16/1900.

82. "Colored Men Celebrating Emancipation Day," *Gazette*, 8/4/1897; "Emancipation Celebration," *Bystander*, 9/8/1899.

83. On slavery as a linking factor among northern black migrants, see Greenwood, *First Fruits of Freedom*, 172; and Schwalm, *Emancipation's Diaspora*, 135.

84. David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA, 2001); Leslie Schwalm, "Emancipation Day Celebrations: The Commemoration of Slavery and Freedom in Iowa," *Annals of Iowa* 62 (2003), 291–332.

These personal and community ties informed and motivated the women's collective action at Liddle & Carter. In addition to factors like gender, race, and class, "family and community ties" have a fundamental "bearing on the consciousness and labor activity of both women and men—indeed, on the development of an entire labor community."<sup>85</sup> We see this not only among the seven Liddle & Carter women but also in their ties to other African Americans who were challenging the color line in employment in Cedar Rapids in the 1890s.

The women seem to have coordinated their protest with William Raspberry, a prominent figure in black and organized labor circles in Cedar Rapids. He was Mary Bowlin's brother-in-law, and he knew Emma Oliphant, Mattie Wade, Flora Bouey, and the other protestors very well through the AME Church, Light House Society, Emancipation Day celebrations, and other clubs and activities.<sup>86</sup> He, too, was frustrated by what it meant to be black and working class. As he told the press, "It will be so in a short time that a colored man cannot get anything to do in Cedar Rapids."<sup>87</sup> During the turmoil with Liddle & Carter, Raspberry served as the women's public spokesman.<sup>88</sup>

The women also knew Eva Broadie, another young black woman pushing against the color line in women's factory work.<sup>89</sup> Within just two weeks of the confrontation at Liddle & Carter, the *Bystander* intriguingly reported that "Miss Eva

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85. Carole Turbin, "Reconceptualizing Family, Work, and Labor Organizing: Working Women in Troy, 1860-1890," in *Hidden Aspects of Women's Work*, ed. Christine Bose, Roslyn Feldberg, and Natalie Sokoloff (New York, 1987), 183-

86. For excellent examples, see Ardis Cameron, "Bread and Roses Revisited: Women's Culture and Working-Class Activism in the Lawrence Strike of 1912," in *Women, Work, and Protest*; Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom*; and Elizabeth Clark-Lewis, *Living In, Living Out: African American Domestic Workers in Washington, DC, 1910-1940* (Washington, DC, 1994).

86. "Personal," *Gazette*, 8/5/1896; "Additional [sic] Personal and Local," *Gazette*, 10/21/1896; "The Eagles Celebrate in Good Old-Fashioned Style," *Gazette*, 7/4/1902; "Mrs. Laura Raspberry," *Gazette*, 2/17/1904; "CRB," *Bystander*, 7/30/1897, 9/9/1898, 11/18/1898.

87. "Threatened to Strike," *Gazette*, 9/2/1897.

88. "Color Line," *Gazette*, 9/4/1897; "Not the Foreman; Henry [sic] Raspberry Objects to a Title Which Is Not His Own," *Gazette*, 9/20/1897.

89. Alison Givens and Kyleigh Munkel, "The Broadie Family," unpublished research paper, Coe College, April 2014. Broadie seems to have been particularly good friends with Emma Oliphant.

Broadie is the only Afro-American young lady working in the oat meal mill."<sup>90</sup> That brief two-line reference is the only clear record of Broadie's or any black woman's employment in a Cedar Rapids factory during this period.<sup>91</sup> Thus, in the late summer and fall of 1897, Emma Oliphant may have had good reason to believe that similar success at Liddle & Carter was within reach. Month after month publications like the *Bystander* "posted news of the 'color line' as it was drawn locally as well as nationally," reporting on "black successes in 'breaking through'" as well as "further entrenchments of the hated 'line.'"<sup>92</sup>

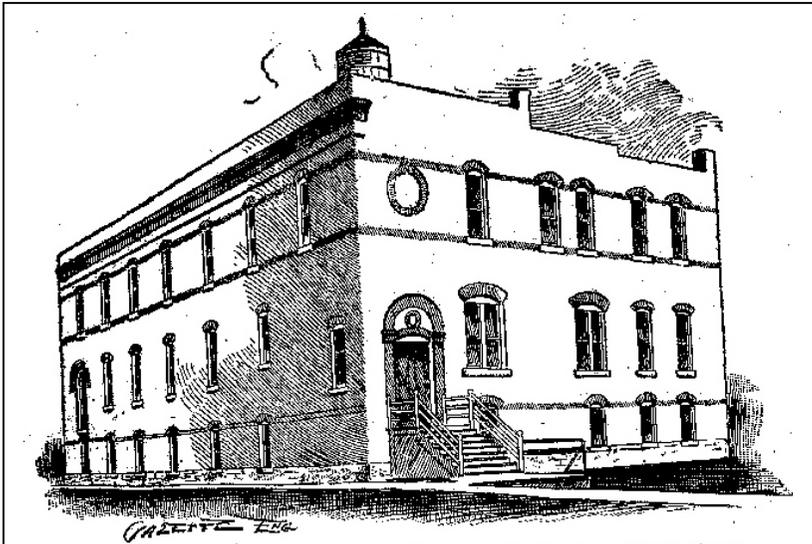
YET when events unfolded on the shop floor at Liddle & Carter on that Thursday in September 1897, Oliphant and the other black women encountered another group of working women who were not about to see that line redrawn in "their" workplace. During the heated and personal confrontation, the black women ran headlong into just how deeply entrenched racial discrimination and segregation were—even in Iowa, which was less overtly racist than the South, and even among other working-class women they had known personally for many years. As with the black women, personal connections and a shared sense of themselves as white laboring ladies formed the foundation of solidarity and labor activism among the existing workers at Liddle & Carter.

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90. "CRB," *Bystander*, 9/17/1897. Broadie most likely worked in the wrapping department, as that was where almost all female workers were concentrated in the late 1890s.

91. I found no other evidence in the *Bystander*, *Gazette*, city directories, or census data about Broadie's employment at the mill. After consulting directories, censuses, photographs of female factory workers, and many newspapers, I found no other evidence of black women's factory employment in Cedar Rapids during this period—with the exception of some references in the *Bystander* to the fact that "quite a number of our people received positions in the new canning factory" in Cedar Rapids. *Bystander*, 9/2/1898. It is unclear, however, whether this included women as well as men. See also *Gazette*, 9/1/1898 and 9/2/1898 (though these articles make no mention of black workers at the canning factories). Major Cedar Rapids factories like Quaker Oats, Sinclair & Company/Wilson's, and Penick and Ford (formerly Douglas Starch Works) began to employ black men in the early 1900s and particularly from World War I onward. "Towns—Cedar Rapids #2," vertical files, AAMI; Bergmann, *The Negro in Iowa*, 64.

92. Cotton, "The Iowa Bystander," 104-5. Notably, columns on "the success of the colored race" often appeared right next to "CRB" columns listing the protesting women's social activities. See, for example, *Bystander*, 3/26/1897.



Where Liddle & Carter make Valley City Overalls, Shirts and Duck Coats.

**LIDDLE & CARTER,**  
**Wholesale Notions and Furnishing Goods**

CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA.

MANUFACTURERS OF VALLEY CITY OVERALLS, PANTS, SHIRTS, ETC.

*The Liddle & Carter garment factory in Cedar Rapids, as it appeared at the time of the confrontation between black and white women workers. Advertisement from The Evening Gazette's Free City Directory of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, May 1898. Republished with permission © 2015 Iowa SourceMedia Group, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.*

Because nearly 90 percent of the female operatives at Liddle & Carter were either European immigrants or the daughters of European immigrants—with 75 percent being Bohemian—it is perhaps not surprising that many of the operatives knew each other very well; indeed, they were relatives, friends, and neighbors. Many—including Mary and Amelia Popelka, Pearl and Mary Langer, Mary and Emma Kozak, Annie and Mary Prochaska, and Annie, Frances, and Mary Kuda—were actual sisters, as well as shop-floor sisters. According to the 1898 sample, 40 percent of the female garment workers at Liddle & Carter labored alongside at least one sister. Even if they were not related,

many of the operatives lived in the same neighborhoods; about a fifth of them lived near each other on C Street West, in the area known today as Czech Village. Most were Bohemian or Bohemian American, although Lulu Dulin and Della Brown, who were native born to native-born parents, also lived on this small stretch of C Street West. Other Liddle & Carter workers, including the Popelka sisters and Bohemian American Mamie Kolarik, lived in the Oak Hill neighborhood on South Tenth and South Ninth streets – right by Mattie Wade, Mary Bowlin, Jessie Martin, and Flora Bouey.<sup>93</sup>

Women also became friends while on the job. Lulu Dulin and Della Brown, for example, became close friends while working at Liddle & Carter; Della even moved in with Lulu's family for a few years.<sup>94</sup> Garment factories like Liddle & Carter and Welch-Cook routinely hired large cohorts of women workers – taking on 15, 20, or even 50 women at a time. Beginning a new job together may have allowed workers to get to know each other and bond more quickly.<sup>95</sup> Mary Vejda recalled how she became close friends with her Welch-Cook coworkers Albia Stepanek and Bess Kadlec. The three Bohemian American women worked together for years and recalled spending their brief on-the-job rest periods singing and playing a "little organ" and chatting with coworkers while drinking the "coffee, sugar, cream, and canned milk" "we all pitched in 10 cents a week for." After hours, Mary, Bess, and Albia went picnicking and dancing and staged plays and musical events. These close friendships helped make Vejda's eight years as a garment worker more tolerable and her time as a wage earner among the most memorable in her life.<sup>96</sup> Such "social variables" overlapped with and reinforced identity categories like gender, class, ethnicity, and race that have long been recognized

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93. "1898 City Directory Sample and Database"; Federal Census (1900).

94. Cedar Rapids City Directories (1898–1901); Federal Census (1900).

95. "Help Wanted-Female," *Gazette*, 10/1/1908, 8/29/1912, 8/9/1919; "Help Wanted," *Republican*, 8/20/1912. For a rarer example of mass hiring at American Cereal, see "Wanted," *Gazette*, 9/19/1902.

96. "Hemmer Autobiographies"; "Welch-Cook Force Celebrates," *Gazette*, 7/17/1909. Albia was the younger sister of Lizzie Stepanek, a wrapper at American Cereal who became a labor activist. Federal Census (1900, 1910); "Mill Workers New Drill Team," *Gazette*, 8/19/1904.

as formative in the development of worker consciousness and collective action.<sup>97</sup>

Personal ties and a largely shared ethnic background created fundamental connections, but it was the existing Liddle & Carter workers' collective sense of themselves as white women that most significantly informed their labor activism in September 1897. As a press report succinctly explained, "The whites would leave were the colored girls allowed to sit down to a machine."<sup>98</sup> Their only grievance was that they did not want black women working at the factory.<sup>99</sup> The white workers initiated their collective action to maintain what they perceived to be "their" jobs—a different and better class of work they believed should be reserved for white women. As many other white working-class women in many other places had done, the Liddle & Carter operatives "deployed collective action to exclude women of color."<sup>100</sup> When it came to the hiring of the black women, it was the Liddle & Carter operatives' "whiteness" that triggered their instant solidarity. White racial identity subsumed any sense of personal connections to the seven black women or any class or gender solidarity with them.

"Old stock" native-born Americans at the time might not have thought of the predominantly Bohemian women as truly or

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97. Katrina Srigley, "'In Case You Hadn't Noticed!': Race, Ethnicity, and Women's Wage-Earning in a Depression-Era City," *Labour/Le Travail* 55 (2005), 74–75.

98. "CRB," *Bystander*, 9/10/1897. Although this *Bystander* account said that only "some of the white employes objected to the hiring of the black women," other versions claimed that "the white women and girls rose up unanimously." "Threatened to Strike," *Gazette*, 9/2/1897. In the end the white women collectively walked off the job to protest the hiring of the black women.

99. Some coverage said the refusal to hire the women had to do with the inexperience of the seven black women. "Color Line," *Gazette*, 9/4/1897; "Not on Color Line," *Gazette*, 9/7/1897. However, this seems to have been an excuse rather than an explanation. To begin with, in its August 1897 notices, Liddle & Carter had not advertised for "experienced" seamstresses, as it did on some other occasions (see previously cited help wanted ads and "Hemmer Autobiographies"). Further, manager Clark had clearly found the applicants qualified enough to hire. Additionally, most of the white women had begun their careers as garment workers with little to no experience. At one point Raspberry publicly stated that if experience was the issue, he could "get experienced colored girls here within twenty-four hours to take their [the white workers'] places." "Color Line," *Gazette*, 9/4/1897.

100. Dana Frank, "White Working-Class Women and the Race Question," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 54 (1998), 91.

fully white, but the operatives at Liddle & Carter clearly thought of themselves as “inhabit[ing] a racial position above African Americans.” Prejudice against black women was particularly entrenched in garment and textile factories. Throughout most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, white working-class women’s “labor agitation” in garment, textile, and other factories was most often initiated to exclude or “rid their workplace of black employees.” Not only did race and white privilege shape women’s employment patterns, they also informed consciousness and collective action. White women’s activism was initiated to preserve “better” jobs for themselves. In this way, explains Eric Arnesen, “white workers actively participated in the construction . . . of their own ‘whiteness.’ . . . Racism and racial identity were not imposed from without but were created from within on the basis of workers’ own experiences and the advantages they afforded.” White women gained real economic advantages from maintaining the color line in women’s employment as well as what W. E. B. Du Bois described as a “public and psychological wage.”<sup>101</sup> Du Bois and other black commentators observed that white working-class women consciously asserted a white racial identity in order to exclude black women from certain categories of employment and to assert their own respectability.

While cultural perceptions were shifting during this period as more white women entered the workforce, white working-class women still often had to assert and defend their reputations as respectable ladies—to distance themselves from perceptions that they were sexually available or less-than-moral because they spent significant time outside of the “feminine” domains of home and family.<sup>102</sup> White working-class women could not always distance

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101. Frank, “White Working-Class Women and the Race Question,” 82, 93; Terborg-Penn, “Survival Strategies,” 148; Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*, 148; Lois Rita Helmbold and Ann Schofield, “Women’s Labor History, 1790–1945,” *Reviews in American History* 17 (1989), 513; Arnesen, “Up from Exclusion,” 163; W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860–1880* (1935; reprint, New York, 1998), 700–701. See also Frederickson, “I Know Which Side I’m On,” 159; and Hunter, *To ‘Joy My Freedom*, 114–20.

102. Wood, *Freedom of the Streets*, throughout but esp. 117 and 256. For more on white working-class women confronting perceptions that they were not ladies, see Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure*, esp. 14; and Helmbold and Schofield, “Women’s Labor History.”

themselves from women of color in neighborhoods or schools, but workplace segregation was seen as providing protection and distance from the “questionable” reputations of women of color.<sup>103</sup>

White working-class women certainly faced struggles to define themselves and to have others think of them as ladies as well as laborers, but black women had a heightened understanding of what it meant to not be viewed and respected as ladies. African American women of all classes had long faced white cultural stereotypes that they were lacking in “morality, delicacy, refinement and other attributes of white femininity” and were sexually promiscuous and available. They were accorded little protection against sexual harassment and unladylike treatment, and “were portrayed as not needing it” in the first place. In the latter decades of the nineteenth century, black women actively worked to combat such perceptions and to claim identities as ladies. One of the primary aims of the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs, founded in 1896, was to “attack . . . the derogatory images and negative stereotypes of Black women’s sexuality.” Famous women like Ida B. Wells, Mary Church Terrell, and Fannie Barrier Williams, as well as lesser-known figures like Emma Oliphant, self-consciously asserted their identity as ladies.<sup>104</sup>

For African American women, asserting “ladyhood” was also an important way to protest racial discrimination. Black women brought many lawsuits during this period—including at least one notable one in Iowa—that challenged their exclusion from “ladies” accommodations on trains, streetcars, and steamboats because they were not perceived by whites to be ladies; instead, they were categorized only as black and were expected to travel in the inferior accommodations intended for men of all races and

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103. As Karen Brodtkin observes, it was “the jobs of white working-class women [that] separated them from men and women of color. Segregation was the most common way of signaling and ostensibly protecting the respectability and femininity of white women wage earners.” Brodtkin, “Race and Gender in the Construction of Class,” 474. See also Frank, “White Working-Class Women and the Race Question,” 87.

104. Darlene Clark Hine and Kathleen Thompson, *A Shining Thread of Hope: The History of Black Women in America* (New York, 1999), 215; idem, “Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West,” *Signs* 14 (1989), 912–20; Brodtkin, “Race and Gender in the Construction of Class,” 475; Welke, *Recasting American Liberty*, 296–97.

classes. In response, black women sued transportation companies. "Without exception," historian Barbara Welke explains, "black women . . . stressed in their complaints that they were ladies; many did not even mention that they were black." The cases, as one of these late nineteenth-century petitions phrased it, were about defining "who is a lady."<sup>105</sup>

At Liddle & Carter, the black women's entire challenge to the color line was based on the claim that these jobs were specifically open to women and, as women, they, too, should be able to work at the factory. Of course, Oliphant and the other black women knew that such factories only hired whites, but in applying for the jobs the women were emphasizing their gender status. For that matter, manager Clark had initially hired the seven applicants because they were female. Oliphant and the other women were asserting that gender should supplant race and that black women were entitled to the same job opportunities as white women.

The black women seem to have anticipated that their gendered claims and assertions of ladyhood might be questioned. Although Oliphant was well known in Cedar Rapids as "the belle of her race," and although she and the other women were clearly not afraid to take public action themselves, they allowed William Raspberry and a committee of five black men to speak for them publicly and "arbitrate the matter." Doing so asserted to the wider white community that the black women were ladies – women protected and "looked after" by "their" men. In fact, the *Gazette* specifically noted that William Raspberry was "looking after the interests" of the "colored working girls."<sup>106</sup> This was a signal to white residents of Cedar Rapids that the black protesters were respectable ladies—a point that clearly had to be asserted to many whites at the time, including manager Clark.

DURING THE CONFRONTATION on September 2, Clark failed to see or treat the black women as ladies. Instead, he "shoved" and "abused" them. As he "became very angry and tried to

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105. Welke, *Recasting American Liberty*, 296. For the Iowa case, *Coger v. North West Union Packet Co.* (1873), see Welke, *Recasting American Liberty*, 293–84, 292–93; and Schwalm, *Emancipation's Diaspora*, 204–6.

106. "Color Line," *Gazette*, 9/4/1897; "Not the Foreman," *Gazette*, 9/20/1897.

thrust them from the building, . . . he shoved Miss Emma Oliphant against the door, almost breaking her arm."<sup>107</sup> In response, Oliphant – like many other late nineteenth-century black women – filed two lawsuits. With these suits, she was insisting that the seven African American protesters were both laborers and ladies.

The first suit sought remuneration from Liddle & Carter for Oliphant's efforts in securing the jobs in the first place. With this claim, Oliphant was emphasizing that the black women were workers whose time and labor were valuable – indeed, just as valuable as that of the white women already working at the factory. Oliphant asked for \$5, the equivalent of a very good week's wages for a female factory worker at the time.<sup>108</sup> By seeking monetary compensation, Oliphant was asserting that the time invested in applying and reporting for work ought to be compensated – and a judge agreed. By the end of September, Oliphant won this suit, and Liddle & Carter was ordered to pay "the sum of \$5.00 for services rendered."<sup>109</sup> That verdict and compensation affirmed the black women's identity as laborers.

That victory must have been satisfying, but the women probably would have preferred being permanently hired at Liddle & Carter. Within a week of the September 2 confrontation, manager Clark acceded to the white workers' demand to maintain the color line, and their strike came to an end. Although the black women had initially resolved that they would continue to try to secure jobs at the factory, by the end of September William Raspberry "advised the colored girls to make no further application for work, believing that it is for the best and because of having been advised by his attorney that it is the best course to pursue." At that point, reported the *Gazette*, "much, it is said, will hinge on the outcome of the damage suit."<sup>110</sup>

The victory in the first suit recognized the black women's identity as laborers, but only a victory in the second suit would

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107. *Bystander*, 9/10/1897. See also *Bystander*, 9/17/1897; "News in Iowa," *Marion Sentinel*, 9/30/1897.

108. The figure might also have represented the sum of a day's factory wage for each of the seven protesting women.

109. "CRB," *Bystander*, 10/8/1897; "News in Iowa," *Marion Sentinel*, 9/30/1897.

110. "Not the Foreman," *Gazette*, 9/20/1897; "Not on Color Line," *Gazette*, 9/7/1897.

publicly acknowledge their ladyhood. That suit charged manager Clark with “willfully and maliciously assaulting” Emma Oliphant on the morning of September 2 as he “pushed her out of the door and otherwise handled her roughly” by either almost breaking or at the very least “bruising her arm and greatly injuring her feelings.”<sup>111</sup> With this suit, Oliphant deliberately proclaimed that she was a respectable lady entitled to considerate, respectful, gentlemanly treatment. Oliphant’s suit was clearly “intertwined with claims about rights based on class, gender, and respectability.”<sup>112</sup> The fact that Oliphant sought much greater damages—\$99 by most accounts but upwards of \$3,000 in others—in the second suit is telling. The principle of the whole Liddle & Carter matter—that the black women were entitled to the same job opportunities and respectful treatment as white women—may have been the most important.

Then, after a year of struggle and legal postponements, and just as the case was about to be heard in Linn County District Court, Emma Oliphant suddenly, in mid-October 1898, dropped her second suit against Liddle & Carter. As the *Gazette* reported, “the case of Oliphant vs. Liddle & Carter was dismissed by the plaintiff without prejudice.”<sup>113</sup> Her decision may have been connected to Liddle & Carter’s involvement in a series of other legal and financial battles over owner J. B. Carter’s questionable personal and corporate financial practices. By early October 1898, the company was declared “wholly insolvent.”<sup>114</sup> Oliphant must have seen little prospect of recovering the damages and, although

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111. “Color Line,” *Gazette*, 9/4/1897.

112. Welke, *Recasting American Liberty*, 302.

113. “The County Seat,” *Gazette*, 10/13/1898. Oliphant’s second suit was first set to be heard in Linn County District Court in November 1897 and repeatedly appeared in court docket and jury selection notices in local newspapers throughout 1898. “CRB,” *Bystander*, 10/8/ 1897; “The District Court,” *Marion Register*, 12/27/1897; “Assignment of Jury Cases . . . Linn Co., District Court,” *Marion Register*, 9/26/1898; “The County Seat,” *Gazette*, 10/3/1898. No further records of the case beyond those reported in local newspapers survive. The registers and records of civil cases from the Linn County District Court were destroyed in the Cedar Rapids flood of 2008.

114. “Affairs of J. B. Carter Attract Much Attention,” *Gazette*, 10/31/1898; “Judge Giberson Makes a Finding in the J. Burdine Carter Case,” *Gazette*, 1/10/1899. The company continued under the name Liddle McDaniel Co. and later Clark McDaniel, which operated until 1930. *Linn County Timelines*, October 1997.

a ruling in her favor might still have meant a great deal, she decided it was no longer worth pressing the case.

In the end, Oliphant's attempt to publicly affirm her ladyhood did not come to fruition. She was not hired for a factory job; nor was she victorious in the assault and mistreatment case. Perhaps this, too, underscores the power of race over class and gender in this context. At Liddle & Carter, race was clearly the heart of the matter; as William Raspberry asserted, employment discrimination had "no basis except the color line."<sup>115</sup> Frustrated with and all too aware of the de facto and de jure discrimination of the 1890s, Oliphant and Raspberry were among the many African Americans who pushed back against the color line—and who came up against just how entrenched it was.

Less than two weeks after the dismissal of the second suit, Oliphant must have watched with more than a little consternation as another group of female workers at another Cedar Rapids factory succeeded in their labor protest. In October 1898 the labor activism and identity of the 150 wrappers who went on strike at American Cereal were informed by the women's personal connections and shared sense of themselves as laborers, ladies, and white Americans of European ethnicity. The wrappers asserted that management had disrespected them as workers by failing to provide "living wages"; as ladies and as Bohemians by declaring that "Bohemians were easy"; and as whites by trying to "make slaves of us."<sup>116</sup> Throughout their strike and labor activism, the wrappers consciously affirmed their "notions of their respectability" and "articulated their identities as women [and] workers," as foreigners and as whites.<sup>117</sup> Like the Liddle & Carter garment workers, the American Cereal wrappers embraced and leveraged their collective identity into successful labor activism; within a week of their walkout, the wrappers had won their strike and "secured all that they asked."<sup>118</sup> One can only imagine what Emma Oliphant and other black women in Cedar Rapids might have

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115. "Color Line," *Gazette*, 9/4/1897.

116. "They Take Action," *Gazette*, 10/27/1898; "Still Out," *Gazette*, 10/24/1898.

117. Strigley, "In Case You Hadn't Noticed!" 75. See also Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure*, 13.

118. "Girls Have Won Strike," *Gazette*, 10/28/1898. For a more detailed account of this strike, see Stek, "The 1898 American Cereal Company Strike."

thought about the wrappers' victory in securing better working conditions for themselves.

EMMA OLIPHANT continued to work for wages for most of the rest of her life. After a brief stint as a live-in domestic, Oliphant went to work for African American business owner O. B. Claire. In the late 1890s Claire opened a lunch stand and confectionary and ice cream shop, which he immediately hired Emma Oliphant to help run. Oliphant worked there until approximately the summer of 1900, when she once again briefly returned to domestic work.<sup>119</sup> A year later, she married Squire Louis (S. L.) Persons in "a small but pretty wedding" at the Oliphant family home on Tenth Avenue.<sup>120</sup>

After marrying, Emma Oliphant Persons appears to have stayed out of the workforce for a few years. She continued to socialize, but the number and variety of her activities dropped off substantially.<sup>121</sup> Squire and Emma never had any children, and by at least 1910 Emma had re-entered the labor force, this time as a manicurist—a self-employed occupation that allowed her full control over her working life. Her decision to return to work

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119. Federal Census (1900); Cedar Rapids City Directory (1901). Claire was also a pioneer of workplace integration in Cedar Rapids. He was the first black member of the Cedar Rapids Police Department. It is not clear whether Claire chose to leave the police department or was forcibly replaced, but by 1899 his position had been given to a white man. Claire then worked as a night janitor at a school and ran the lunch stand business during the day. *Bystander*, 5/12/1899, 9/22/1899, 10/27/1899, 8/17/1900; Federal Census (1880).

120. "In Matrimonial Bonds," *Republican*, 11/21/1901; "Iowa Marriage Records, 1901" (accessed via ancestry.com); Federal Census (1900); Cedar Rapids City Directories (1899–1901). Persons's name appears in records as "S. L.," "Squire Louis," "S. Louis," and "S. Lewis" Persons. He settled in Cedar Rapids in the early 1890s after migrating from Tennessee with his wife, Hattie, and younger brother, Benjamin. Squire and Hattie were prominent in the Cedar Rapids black community. Squire worked for many years as a hotel porter, and within just a few years of settling in Cedar Rapids had purchased a home at 712 Ninth Avenue East. Hattie died of consumption in January 1901. Kelli Shipley West, "The Persons' Family," unpublished research paper, Coe College, April 2014; Iowa State Census (1895); Cedar Rapids City Directories (1893–1918); Federal Census (1900, 1910); "CRB," *Bystander*, 7/23/1897, 10/29/1897; "Obituaries," *Gazette*, 1/16/1901.

121. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, only a handful of notices in the *Bystander* mentioned Emma Oliphant Persons. "Cedar Rapids News," *Bystander*, 10/28/1904, 12/2/1904, 7/5/1912, 3/3/1905.

was also likely once again connected to the economic status of her household. The 1915 Iowa census reported that Squire's total yearly earnings working as a "shoe-shiner" and porter at the Allison Hotel amounted to just \$480. Although she was likely still working as a manicurist, that same census listed no occupation or earnings for Emma.<sup>122</sup>

Within just a year or two of that census, most traces of the working life and activities of Emma Oliphant Persons fade from historical records. She appeared sporadically in city directories from 1917 to 1920 and, although still married, was not listed as part of Squire's household in the 1920 census. Instead, she was listed among the patients living at the Iowa State Hospital in Independence, where she was one of just two black women among some 450 female patients. She died in Independence later that year at the age of 44. Two days later, her husband and surviving siblings attended her funeral at the Bethel Church in Cedar Rapids. She is buried in Oak Hill Cemetery in Cedar Rapids.<sup>123</sup>

THE STRUGGLES of black women like Emma Oliphant to be treated fairly and equally as ladies and laborers would persist for years to come, in Cedar Rapids and across the nation. In the 1890s black women and men actively worked to improve their own individual circumstances and, as Leslie Schwalm puts it, to force "a renegotiation of the 'place' of African Americans in the North."<sup>124</sup> Black women were particularly important agents in the civil rights struggles of the late nineteenth century, as gender created a space for them to advance claims to rights and opportunities they had been denied because of race. The story of Emma Oliphant and the other working-class women involved in the confrontation over the color line at Liddle & Carter deserves to be known, as it illuminates a great deal about women's work, labor activism, and racial, gender, and class identity formation in late nineteenth-century Iowa. Oliphant used labor activism and legal suits to advance claims to fair and equal treatment as a lady,

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122. Cedar Rapids City Directory (1910); Iowa State Census (1915).

123. Federal Census (1920); "Funeral of Mrs. Emma Persons," *Gazette*, 10/16/1920; "Sites and Structures: Mental Health Institute," Buchanan County Historical Society, <http://www.buchanancountyhistory.com/mhi.php>.

124. Schwalm, *Emancipation's Diaspora*, 1.

a laborer, and an African American living in a society that sought to marginalize all of those identities. She was an ordinary yet extraordinary African American woman who helped to renegotiate the “place” of black working-class women when she challenged the boundaries of racial restriction in women’s employment in late nineteenth-century Cedar Rapids.

# The 1898 American Cereal Company Strike in Cedar Rapids: Gender, Ethnicity, and Labor in Late Nineteenth-Century Iowa

PAM STEK

ON OCTOBER 25, 1898, approximately 100 female employees on strike at the American Cereal Company in Cedar Rapids met with company manager George McDonald to press their demands for higher wages and improved working conditions.<sup>1</sup> After McDonald refused to discuss new terms, the women visited their old work room and accosted the workers who had been hired to take their places. The strikers disregarded the foreman's orders to leave the premises and instead began throwing supplies out the windows, tearing open packages of oatmeal, and verbally abusing strikebreakers.<sup>2</sup> Newspapers throughout the Midwest picked up the story of the "riotous girl strikers" who "play[ed] havoc" in the

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I gratefully acknowledge a grant from the State Historical Society of Iowa that supported my research on this article. I am also grateful to Marvin Bergman and the *Annals of Iowa's* anonymous reviewers for their thoughtful and helpful comments.

1. The strike began on October 22, but the striking workers' first meeting with McDonald did not occur until October 25. Newspaper accounts varied on the exact number of women on strike. Some reports put the number at 135, while others gave a less precise total of approximately 100.

2. "Could Not Agree," *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette* (hereafter cited as *Gazette*), 10/25/1898.

THE ANNALS OF IOWA 74 (Spring 2015). © The State Historical Society of Iowa, 2015.

cereal mill's packaging room.<sup>3</sup> The women's "violent" behavior made for exciting copy, but few newspapers outside Cedar Rapids covered the rest of the story. The day after the confrontation, striking workers switched to the more peaceful tactic of petitioning the city council to revoke the mill's tax-exempt status. Though less sensational than attacks on company property, the women's use of political pressure had the desired effect. On October 27, the American Cereal Company agreed to meet the women's terms and reinstated the striking workers.

The 1898 strike of American Cereal Company workers is exceptional for several reasons. The strike was orchestrated and conducted by women workers alone, without the benefit of formal union leadership or support. During the ten-year period between 1895 and 1905, only 83 of the almost 16,000 strikes ordered by labor organizations nationwide (less than 0.5 percent), were conducted entirely by women workers. In only 35 of those 83 strikes (42 percent), did female strikers fully succeed in winning their demands.<sup>4</sup> The women cereal workers' victorious campaign represents an exceptional example of a successful female-organized strike in the late nineteenth century.

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3. See, for example, "Girl Strikers in Iowa Play Havoc in an Offending Plant," *Chicago Tribune*, 10/25/1898; "Girl Strikers Violent," *Milwaukee Journal*, 10/25/1898; "Riotous Girl Strikers," *Logansport (IN) Journal*, 10/26/1898; and "Girls on a Strike," *Eau Claire (WI) Weekly Telegram*, 10/27/1898. The quotation is taken from the *Logansport Journal*.

4. John B. Andrews and W. D. P. Bliss, *History of Women in Trade Unions* (1911; reprint, New York, 1974), 204-7. These statistics include only those strikes ordered by labor organizations. In 1900, approximately 20 percent of women in the United States worked for wages outside the home, but only about 3 percent of women engaged in industrial occupations were members of trade unions. Given the low number of female union members, it is likely that the incidence of strikes conducted by women unaffiliated with labor organizations was higher than that of strikes carried out under union auspices. See S. Jay Kleinberg, "Women in the Economy of the United States from the American Revolution to 1920," in *Retrieving Women's History: Changing Perceptions of the Role of Women in Politics and Society*, ed. S. Jay Kleinberg (New York, 1988); Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (New York, 1982), 152. The statistic cited by Andrews and Bliss for successful women's strikes is lower than that for all strikes (including men and women workers) ordered by labor organizations during the 25-year period from 1881 to 1905, when 49 percent of such strikes fully succeeded. See U.S. Bureau of Labor, *Twenty-first Annual Report of the Commissioner of Labor, 1906, Strikes and Lockouts*, (1907), 36-37, at [http://congressional.proquest.com.proxy.lib.uiowa.edu/congressional/docview/t47.d48.5213\\_h.doc.822?accountid=14663](http://congressional.proquest.com.proxy.lib.uiowa.edu/congressional/docview/t47.d48.5213_h.doc.822?accountid=14663) (accessed 5/20/2014).

The women's triumph demonstrates that despite their lack of formal trade union organization, the female strikers were not "unorganized." Their mobilization and strategies evinced familiarity with and embrace of the techniques of organized labor: development and maintenance of group solidarity, clear articulation of specific grievances, cultivation of community support, and the demand to negotiate directly with company management over the terms of employment. Historians of women's labor tend to highlight women's efforts to establish and maintain permanent trade union organizations and often equate labor militancy with union membership.<sup>5</sup> Although such scholarship makes an invaluable contribution to our understanding of women's labor, it does not address the experiences and concerns of the vast majority of working women who did not join unions but nevertheless publicly agitated for redress of work-related grievances.<sup>6</sup> A focus on trade union organization downplays the importance of women's labor activism conducted without the assistance of a recognized union. Describing such activism as "spontaneous" or "emotional" overlooks the commitment and organization required to mobilize and maintain cohesion among a group of strikers unconnected by formal institutional organization.<sup>7</sup> Analyzing episodes of women's "unorganized" labor activism provides insight into how the majority of female workers — those who did not join

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5. See, for example, Stephen H. Norwood, *Labor's Flaming Youth: Telephone Operators and Worker Militancy, 1878–1923* (Urbana, IL, 1990); Dorothy Sue Cobble, *Dishing It Out: Waitresses and Their Unions in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana, IL, 1991); Carole Turbin, *Working Women of Collar City: Gender, Class, and Community in Troy, New York, 1864–86* (Urbana, IL, 1992). In her analysis of almost 50 strikes between 1886 and 1903, all of which involved both male and female workers, Ileen DeVault discusses only one that did not involve formal trade union participation. See DeVault, "'Too Hard on the Women, Especially': Striking Together for Women Workers' Issues," *International Review of Social History* 51 (2006), 441–62.

6. Alice Kessler-Harris estimates that only 3.3 percent of women employed in industrial occupations in 1900 belonged to trade unions. That figure fell even further in the following decade, reaching a low of 1.5 percent in 1910. See Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work*, 152.

7. Leslie Woodcock Tentler, *Wage-Earning Women: Industrial Work and Family Life in the United States, 1900–1930* (New York, 1979), 78; Venus Green, *Race on the Line: Gender, Labor, and Technology in the Bell System, 1880–1980* (Durham, NC, 2001), 90, 105; Suellen Hoy, "The Irish Girls' Rising: Building the Women's Labor Movement in Progressive-Era Chicago," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 9 (2012), 77–100.

trade unions—viewed their labor and the strategies they employed to achieve their ends.

The 1898 strike in Cedar Rapids is also unusual because local newspapers took seriously the strikers' cause. Newspaper reporters interviewed strikers' representatives, reported the women's concerns, and provided in-depth coverage of the strikers' meetings and activities. This level of media attention was unusual in an era when newspaper editors and reporters tended to ignore or minimize the grievances of female workers. The largest and most widely publicized strike of women workers in the early twentieth century was the 1909–1910 shirtwaist strike in New York City, when 20,000 women walked off their jobs in hundreds of factories. During that four-month-long labor dispute, the popular press printed only one article authored by a striking worker and carried only very brief quotes from striking women.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, the week-long strike of approximately 100 women in Cedar Rapids garnered extensive local coverage, with daily reports focused on the women's grievances and strategies.

The 1898 women cereal workers' strike provides historians with rare insight into women workers' efforts to improve their labor conditions and economic security, their self-identification as skilled workers, and their ability to organize a successful strike campaign. American Cereal Company managers tried to discourage and intimidate the female strikers with a variety of tactics, including hiring strikebreakers and publicly disparaging the character of Bohemian immigrants, an ethnic group from which many of the cereal company's employees were drawn. The strikers also faced the dominant societal view that devalued women's wage labor and often cast suspicions on workers' attempts to

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8. Nan Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1999), 84–87. Similarly, during the 1909–1910 strike of shirtwaist workers in Philadelphia, only a fraction of the articles published in local newspapers acknowledged workers' grievances. Instead, the Philadelphia media framed the strikers and their union as instigators of violence and blamed outside agitators, not difficult and dangerous working conditions, for the labor unrest. See Julianne Kornacki, "Revealing Division: The Philadelphia Shirtwaist Strike, the Jewish Community, and Republican Machine Politics, 1909–1910," *Pennsylvania History* 80 (2013), 376.

organize.<sup>9</sup> In the same decade that witnessed union defeats at steel mills in Homestead, Pennsylvania, in 1892 and in the nationwide railway strike of 1894, the striking women in Cedar Rapids galvanized community support for their cause and shrewdly turned to their advantage public perceptions of the cereal company's unfair manipulation of city tax policy. Elsewhere in the nation, state and local governments offered military and judicial assistance to employers during periods of labor unrest, but in Cedar Rapids female strikers claimed the right to appeal to city leaders for help in their fight for higher wages and better working conditions. Using legal and political strategies, the young women cereal workers prevailed against ethnic discrimination and powerful company resistance in their efforts to shape the conditions of their employment and to gain recognition as competent and serious workers.

BY THE END of the nineteenth century, the American Cereal Company was the largest oatmeal producer in the nation and one of the largest employers in Cedar Rapids. Canadian émigrés John Stuart and his son Robert, along with Cedar Rapids businessman George Douglas, established the North Star Oatmeal Mills in the city in 1873. The quality and quantity of oats grown in the region, an abundance of skilled labor, and an advantageous location on the Cedar River all contributed to the mill's swift growth as part of the rapidly expanding cereal industry. George Douglas and Robert Stuart expanded their holdings in 1879 to include the Imperial Mill in Chicago and eventually moved the company's business headquarters to that city. In 1891 Stuart negotiated the inclusion of the Stuart and Douglas mills into a trust made up of the seven largest oatmeal manufacturers in the country, united as the American Cereal Company with headquarters in Akron, Ohio. The Cedar Rapids mill was the second-largest of the trust's

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9. For a discussion of attitudes toward women's labor in the late nineteenth century, see Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work*, 75–214. Sharon Wood analyzes women's work in Davenport, another eastern Iowa city, in the late nineteenth century and demonstrates that working women's efforts to negotiate urban territory and shape public policy were opposed by men who wanted to maintain the gendered boundaries of public spaces. See Wood, *The Freedom of the Streets: Work, Citizenship, and Sexuality in a Gilded Age City* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2005).

cereal producers. By 1901 the company employed 600 workers in Cedar Rapids, and mill management was planning to increase its capacity by 250 percent.<sup>10</sup>

The company used its status as one of the city's major employers to obtain tax concessions from the city government. At a city council meeting on May 21, 1895, representatives of the American Cereal Company requested a ten-year exemption from city taxation. In its petition, the company stated that it had "become necessary to either enlarge the plant at Cedar Rapids or procure another plant farther west." These improvements, the company argued, "will cost a large sum of money and furnish work for a large increase of employees . . . to say nothing about the employment of a large number of resident mechanics" to construct the proposed new buildings. Claiming its status as one of the city's largest employers and threatening to move its operations elsewhere proved an effective strategy for the company. Although some aldermen opposed the tax exemption and others argued for a reduced period of five years, in the end the city council approved the company's petition for a ten-year release from city taxes.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to securing favorable tax provisions, the American Cereal Company relied on labor provided by a diverse group of employees to expand its operations and increase its profitability. The city had an immigrant population that included migrants from Ireland, Germany, and Scotland, but in the late 1890s, Bohemian immigrants from the Austro-Hungarian Empire represented the largest ethnic group in Cedar Rapids.<sup>12</sup> Bohemian settlers had begun arriving in the city and surrounding areas in the

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10. Harrison John Thornton, *The History of the Quaker Oats Company* (Chicago, 1933), 37-70; Janette Stevenson Murray and Frederick Gray Murray, *The Story of Cedar Rapids* (New York, 1950), 106-9; Arthur F. Marquette, *Brands, Trademarks, and Good Will: The Story of the Quaker Oats Company* (New York, 1967), 34-77; "Our Greatest Home Industry," *Gazette*, 1/1/1901.

11. "Taxes Are Rebated," *Gazette*, 5/22/1895.

12. In late nineteenth-century Cedar Rapids, English-language newspapers referred to immigrants from the lands of the Czech Republic as "Bohemian" even though some had emigrated from Moravia or other regions. Despite its imprecision, I follow the contemporary usage of the term. For a discussion of the origins of Czech immigrants in Cedar Rapids, see Martha E. Griffith, "Bohemian Settlement in Cedar Rapids" (M.A. thesis, University of Wyoming, 1942), 6-21.

early 1850s. Many of them fled central Europe after the failed revolutions of 1848. The later decades of the century witnessed a shift in the number and occupations of Bohemian immigrants. Whereas the earlier Bohemian immigrant stream tended to be small and made up of farmers and artisans, after about 1880 the number of Bohemian immigrants increased and a greater percentage worked as laborers, attracted by the city's growing industrial sector. By one historian's estimation, by the early decades of the twentieth century people of Bohemian descent came to represent one-fourth of the city's population. Many Bohemian laborers found employment with the American Cereal Company. In 1898 approximately one-fourth of the mill's employees were Bohemian immigrants or their offspring.<sup>13</sup>

Despite their contributions to the city's economy, during the last decades of the nineteenth century Bohemian immigrants struggled to overcome widespread prejudice against eastern Europeans. Bohemian immigrants faced particularly harsh censure after the 1886 Haymarket Massacre in Chicago. To reporters who equated recent immigrants with bomb-throwing anarchists, Bohemian immigrants represented a significant threat to national security. Reporting on events in Chicago, Cedar Rapids newspapers carried stories of rioting Bohemian workers parading under the red flag of socialism and attacking police officers.<sup>14</sup> The *Cedar*

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13. Griffith, "Bohemian Settlement in Cedar Rapids," 6-9, 24-26; The Federal Writers' Project, Works Progress Administration, State of Iowa, *Guide to Cedar Rapids and Northeast Iowa* (Cedar Rapids, 1937), 22; Luther A. Brewer and Barthinius L. Wick, *History of Linn County, Iowa, from Its Earliest Settlement to the Present Time*, 2 vols. (Chicago, 1911), 1:121-23. The estimate of Bohemian immigrants employed at the American Cereal Company is based on an analysis of 352 company workers listed in the *Gazette's* 1898 city directory. See Cedar Rapids City Directories (1890-1898), 1898-05-01, Digital Archives of the Marion Public Library, <http://mpl.newspaperarchive.com/1890-1899>. Of these 352 employees, 97 (28 percent) had Bohemian surnames. These totals may not be precise, since some individuals employed at the mill may not have been listed in the directory and some surnames may have been misidentified. However, an enumeration of 352 employees in 1898 appears to be consistent with the 600 employees the *Gazette* reported in 1901. In 1898 the mill undertook a significant enlargement of its facilities that would have led to a sizeable increase in the number of its employees by 1901. See "Our Greatest Home Industry," *Gazette*, 1/1/1901.

14. "Mangled Blue-Coats," *Cedar Rapids Standard* (hereafter cited as *Standard*), 5/13/1886.

*Rapids Weekly Times* charged that “the participants in the murderous riots were . . . Poles, Bohemians, and Italians” and opined that if socialist immigrants “do not like free America, let them go back to the despotic countries from which they came. They are not fit to be American citizens.” The *Times* reprinted an editorial from the *Iowa Falls Sentinel*, calling “sound” and “wise” the *Sentinel* editor’s diatribe against the “importation of red-mouthed Poles, Bohemians, and other foreign classes whose whole carcasses are impregnated with socialistic and nihilistic blood and taint, and who have no higher appreciation of our institutions and liberties than so many hyenas fresh from their native jungles.”<sup>15</sup> In the eyes of those who espoused such nativist sentiments, the alleged affiliation of Bohemian immigrants with anarchism and socialism marked them as primitive savages unfit for U.S. citizenship.<sup>16</sup> Bohemian immigrants contested these allegations in the pages of local newspapers and denied any connection with anarchism, referencing their long years of residence in the United States, their high rates of home ownership, and the leading of “industrious, frugal, and honest lives” as proof of their worthiness as law-abiding citizens.<sup>17</sup>

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15. “The Socialistic Spawn,” *Cedar Rapids Weekly Times* (hereafter cited as *Times*), 5/13/1886; “Sound on the Strike Question,” *Times*, 5/20/1886. The *Times* later retracted its blanket condemnation of Bohemian immigrants, conceding that Bohemian immigrants in Cedar Rapids were industrious, thrifty, and law-abiding. See “Defends the Bohemians,” *Times*, 6/3/1886.

16. Characterizing Bohemian immigrants as animals and savages also served to call into question their racial status, since native-born whites often used such derogatory language when referring to African Americans and Native Americans. In the late nineteenth century, the racial status of new immigrants was ambiguous. Their light skin offered the promise, but not the guarantee, of inclusion in the “white” race. From 1840 until 1924, mass European migration led to a fracturing of whiteness into a hierarchy of multiple, and often contested, categories of “white” races. Early twentieth-century conceptions of race were rooted not necessarily in skin color but nevertheless in assumptions of inherent difference. Deficiencies ascribed to new immigrants were often connected to their perceived fitness for certain types of jobs or for citizenship, much as they were for people of color but at different levels of intensity and permanence. See Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA, 1998); and David R. Roediger, *Working towards Whiteness: How America’s Immigrants Became White: The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York, 2006).

17. “Not the Bohemians,” *Standard*, 5/20/1886; “Bohemian Americans,” *Gazette*, 5/25/1886; “Defends the Bohemians,” *Times*, 6/3/1886.

As nativists' calls for immigration restriction intensified nationwide in the 1890s, Bohemian immigrants faced increasingly harsh denunciations of their ability to contribute to American society. In February 1891, at a Knights of Labor meeting in Des Moines, Iowa Secretary of State J. M. McFarland called for restrictions on the entry into the United States of "Dagos, Huns, and other undesirable immigrants" from the lands of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In his speech, McFarland quoted from a report written by the U.S. Consul-General to Austria, who described Bohemian laborers as "violent ultra-socialists" and "illiterate and ignorant in the extreme." Bohemian immigrant and Cedar Rapids resident L. J. Palda, in open letters published in both the *Cedar Rapids Standard* and the *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, disputed McFarland's "racial prejudice and ignorance." Palda was an influential socialist journalist and labor organizer who in the 1890s earned his living as a cigar maker in Cedar Rapids. In his letters to the editor, Palda pointed to Bohemians' industriousness, high rates of literacy in their native language, and their support of moderate labor reform as evidence of their willingness and ability to participate in U.S. institutions and politics.<sup>18</sup>

Many Bohemian immigrants became actively involved in city and state politics to further establish their claims to citizenship. At least one Bohemian immigrant served as a Cedar Rapids alderman from 1883 to 1900, and in 1898 Bohemians were appointed as fire chief and sewer inspector for the city.<sup>19</sup> J. M. B. Letovsky, the founder of one of the city's first Bohemian newspapers, *Slovan Americky*, served as mayor of nearby Iowa City before moving to Cedar Rapids and was elected to the state legislature in 1890.<sup>20</sup>

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18. "McFarland Replies," *Gazette*, 2/24/1891; "Calling Him Down," *Gazette*, 2/19/1891; "Palda Replies," *Standard*, 3/5/1891; "The First Number," *Gazette*, 9/8/1892. For more on Palda, see Thomas Capek, *The Čechs (Bohemians) in America: A Study of Their National, Cultural, Political, Social, Economic and Religious Life* (Boston, 1920), 137, 195–96.

19. Griffith, "Bohemian Settlement in Cedar Rapids," 165–66.

20. Dr. J. Rudiš-Jičínský, "The Bohemians in Linn County, Iowa," in *Atlas of Linn County, Iowa* (Davenport, 1907), 210; Irving B. Weber, *Historical Stories about Iowa City*, 8 vols. (Iowa City, 1976–1994), 3:195, 201; Bohumil Shimek, "The Bohemians in Johnson County," n.d., State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City; *Cedar Rapids Centennial, 1856–1956* (Cedar Rapids, 1956). J. M. B. Letovsky founded the *Slovan Americky* in Iowa City in 1869 and moved his

Over time, the Cedar Rapids Bohemian population gained a reputation for its staunch support of the Democratic Party and for its strong participation in city politics. The *Cedar Rapids Standard* encouraged city residents to follow the example of “our Bohemian friends” who routinely convened well-attended meetings to discuss important city matters. The *Standard* also denied the charge that Bohemians’ votes could be bought with a round of drinks, citing the “Bohemian record for good citizenship” as proof of the absurdity of such an accusation.<sup>21</sup>

Both male and female immigrants traveled to Cedar Rapids in pursuit of economic opportunities. While men found employment as skilled and unskilled factory hands and tradesmen, women’s employment options were more limited. Many young single women worked as domestic servants. Sarah Kinney, who moved to Cedar Rapids with her physician husband and four children in 1874, noted in a letter to her mother that “most servants here are Bohemians.” Work as a maid was arduous. Kinney confided to her mother that she “almost [felt] wicked” letting her young Bohemian maid do all the family’s washing, ironing, cooking, and cleaning for wages of three dollars per week. Some farmers’ daughters worked as domestics during the slack season and returned home to work in the fields during harvest time. Others used domestic service as a way to enter the Cedar Rapids job market but moved on to employment in one of the city’s factories or department stores when the opportunity arose. Like young women elsewhere, many Bohemian immigrants’ daughters likely sought public employment to escape the long hours and relatively little autonomy associated with domestic service in private homes.<sup>22</sup>

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printing operations to Cedar Rapids after 1872. No extant copies of the *Slovan Americky* exist from the period of the 1898 strike.

21. “Mr. Palda Speaks,” *Gazette*, 8/13/1885; “Bohemians Satisfied,” *Standard*, 12/14/1893; “An Exception,” *Standard*, 3/19/1896.

22. Griffith, “Bohemian Settlement in Cedar Rapids,” 14, 157; Sarah Kinney to Mother, 1/13/1875, 9/2/1875, Cedar Rapids Chamber of Commerce Correspondence and Clippings 1874–1957 folder, Cedar Rapids Chamber of Commerce Records, Special Collections Department, University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa City; “A Bohemian’s Answer,” *Cedar Rapids Times*, 7/12/1877. For a discussion of working women’s attitudes toward domestic service, see Lara Vapnak, *Breadwinners: Working Women and Economic Independence, 1865–1920* (Urbana, IL, 2009).

For young women in Cedar Rapids, one alternative to domestic service was employment in the city's growing industrial sector. In 1898 approximately one-third of the American Cereal Company's employees were women, and of its female workers, about half were from the city's Bohemian community.<sup>23</sup> The wrapping department was one area for which the company hired women exclusively.<sup>24</sup> Known as "wrappers," these workers pasted packaging labels on the ends of filled boxes of oatmeal and then covered the sides with a larger wrapping. The labeling operations were conducted in a separate room in the factory where female wrappers sat on backless stools at long tables holding paste pans and brushes. Compensation was based on the piece rate system, with wrappers paid a set amount for each hundred boxes wrapped and labeled. Company management assessed fines if women accidentally tore labels or pasted boxes together or if boxes were damaged during transport from the wrapping room. During busy times, female wrappers typically worked from seven o'clock in the morning until eight or nine o'clock in the evening with a half-hour break for lunch. During the slack season, wrappers were laid off or received less pay due to the reduced volume of boxes packaged.<sup>25</sup>

DISAGREEMENTS between the wrappers and company management over wages and working conditions resulted in a walk-out of approximately 100 workers on Saturday, October 22, 1898, at 2:00 in the afternoon. The women may have initiated the strike on Saturday afternoon in order to minimize disruption to their

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23. The estimate of female employees at the American Cereal Company is based on an analysis of 352 company workers listed in the *Gazette's* 1898 city directory. Of these 352 employees, 115 (33 percent) were women; of these 115 women, 58 (50 percent) had at least one Bohemian immigrant parent. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Federal Census (1900), <http://0-persi.heritagequestonline.com>. Again, these totals may not be precise, since some individuals employed at the mill may not have been listed in the directory.

24. The mill also hired women as clerical employees. It is possible that the company hired female workers in other departments as well, but such practices are not documented in extant records.

25. "Still Out," *Gazette*, 10/24/1898; "Cedar Rapids [Linn Co.], Iowa, 1895," sheet 3, Digital Sanborn Maps 1867-1970, [http://sanborn.umi.com.proxy.lib.uiowa.edu/image/view?state=ia&reelid=reel03&lcid=2597&imagename=00040&mapname=Cedar Rapids 1895,sheet 3&CCSI=2802n](http://sanborn.umi.com.proxy.lib.uiowa.edu/image/view?state=ia&reelid=reel03&lcid=2597&imagename=00040&mapname=Cedar+Rapids+1895,sheet+3&CCSI=2802n), accessed 3/14/2014.

paychecks, hoping that after a day's reflection, company management would meet their demands by Monday. The women planned to march out together, probably anticipating that the "sight of a hundred young ladies filing out of the building and down the street [would excite] considerable comment" and center public attention on their cause. Although initially the strikers declined to present their case in detail to reporters, several unnamed representatives stated that their primary demand was higher wages and also expressed their indignation at being forced to clean up the work room after hours.<sup>26</sup>

The strikers' reticence to discuss their grievances evaporated by Monday, October 24, perhaps because management refused to discuss their demands and possibly in part because the *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette* lent a sympathetic ear to their grievances. The paper's October 24 edition contained a lengthy account of a *Gazette* reporter's interview with an unnamed female representative of the strikers; she expressed a number of the wrappers' concerns, including their desired wage raise to 18 cents per hundred packages wrapped, an increase of almost 30 percent. Requesting such a large increase may have simply been a negotiating tactic. The interviewed striker acknowledged that "we hardly hope to secure" the requested amount, "which is small enough for the work done," but expressed the wrappers' expectation that company management would be willing to make some concessions rather than incur the expense of training replacements.<sup>27</sup>

The unnamed strikers' representative pointed out that part of the reason the wrappers wanted higher wages was that management had recently changed the wrapping procedure and the new protocol required workers to handle each package several more times than they had previously. The amount of time required to wrap each package rose significantly under the new system; the women estimated that it increased their work load by 50 percent while their wages stayed the same. The strikers' representative disputed management's contention that "with a little practice" the wrappers would be able to do as much work under the new system as they had under the old. She also dis-

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26. "On a Strike," *Gazette*, 10/22/1898.

27. "Still Out," *Gazette*, 10/24/1898.

counted company manager George McDonald's claim that wrappers typically earned between \$1.00 and \$1.40 per day. According to the interviewed female striker,

There are a few girls in the mill who might make \$1.40 a day by working from 7 in the morning until 9 at night, but Mr. McDonald forgot to say anything about the days and weeks that the mill is shut down, and the fact that the best and most industrious of us wrappers are not making much more than \$2 a week on the average. He forgot to say that whenever there is a rush he employs all the hands he can get and pushes everything as hard as he can until the order is out of the way, and then lays us all off until we are needed again. He forgot to tell anything about the system of fines which he has inaugurated and the fact that time after time we go to the mill and find that our services are not needed, frequently being compelled to wait until noon before we know whether there is going to be any work on that or the following day. He forgot to tell about charging us a cent for every wrapper we tear in handling and a number of other interesting things seem to have slipped his memory. . . . He did not say anything about docking us 25 cents for being off Saturday afternoon, when we are working by the hundred pieces. He did not tell the reporter that time and again they have compelled girls to work for a day or more for nothing, while they were learning how to wrap.<sup>28</sup>

This list of complaints makes clear the wrappers' resentment over not just low wages but also toward company policies that served to decrease the women's economic security as well as their paychecks. To the wrappers, management's refusal to guarantee steady work hours, the imposition of fines for normal wear and tear, and the levying of economic penalties in exchange for a few hours of free time on Saturday afternoons all represented arbi-

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28. *Ibid.* Nationwide, the median weekly wage for women workers age 16 and older was \$5.64 in 1900, approximately half the \$10.55 median weekly wage for men. One-fourth of women workers earned less than \$4.49 per week, while only one-fourth of wage-earning women took home more than \$6.86 each week. Edith Abbott, *Women in Industry: A Study in American Economic History* (New York, 1910), 311-12. If, as McDonald claimed, the wrappers were earning between \$1.00 and \$1.40 per day, their weekly earnings of \$6.00-8.40 would have placed them above the median or even in the upper quartile of working women nationwide. On the other hand, if economic penalties and reduced hours during the slack season drove their average weekly wages down to \$2.00, the wrappers earned significantly less than the bottom quartile threshold of female wage earners.

trary policies that served the company's interests at the expense of their female workers' personal security and well-being.

The strikers' representative went on to tell the reporter about other grievances related to the women's autonomy and personal dignity. She criticized McDonald for refusing to allow sick employees to leave unless they were so ill that they could no longer work, and she claimed that company management, to prevent any workers from leaving early, kept the women's hats and coats locked in the dressing room until the noon break and quitting time. The strikers also chafed at one of management's new regulations, which required workers to telephone or telegraph ("Just imagine one of us paying 10 cents for a messenger!") on days when they could not come to work. Company managers, the women complained, refused to extend the same courtesy to their workers. Instead of informing employees in advance of a shutdown in operations, management required employees to report to the mills each day to find out if their services would be needed. On slow days, managers expected the women to wait, seated silently at their work tables, until boxes became available for wrapping. The wrappers resented the limited time off available for holidays or other special events; the strikers' representative noted the women's disappointment at being required to work on Labor Day.<sup>29</sup>

The strikers also decried the poor working conditions in the wrapping room. They took exception to being forced to furnish their own ice water and water cooler but particularly resented paying for replacement brushes and paste pans when those provided by the company wore out after normal use. Those workers

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29. "Still Out," *Gazette*, 10/24/1898. It is not clear from the *Gazette's* report whether the stringent company controls over workers' ability to leave the factory before the end of the work day applied to male workers as well, but such close monitoring was likely limited to female employees. Employers often exercised greater paternalism in their regulation of female workers. See, for example, Tentler, *Wage-Earning Women*, 28; Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work*, 162; Patricia A. Cooper, *Once a Cigar Maker: Men, Women, and Work Culture in American Cigar Factories, 1900-1919* (Urbana, IL, 1987); and Norwood, *Labor's Flaming Youth*, 36-39. Company owners and managers at times instituted stricter controls of women laborers in order to demonstrate the respectability of their workplaces and to reassure parents of young women workers that company regulations would substitute for familial controls in the public world of waged labor. However, such supervision placed greater limitations on women employees' freedom and personal autonomy.

whose pans rusted through sooner than “Mr. McDonald thought they ought to” plugged the old ones with rags rather than ask for new ones. In addition, the strikers resented being forced to stay after hours to clean up the wrapping room. McDonald docked the pay of those who refused to work overtime scrubbing their work spaces, additional labor that cut into the women’s already limited free time. The wrappers also complained of a new regulation that required the women to carry off the wrapped boxes in large trays weighing 20 pounds each, a task for which management had formerly employed young men. While clearly a cost-saving measure for the company, McDonald justified the change with the disingenuous argument that “boys and girls” should not work together.<sup>30</sup>

The cereal workers’ grievances reflected common concerns expressed by other women workers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Proposed wage cuts provided the impetus for many female-led strikes.<sup>31</sup> During this period, women on average earned half what men did.<sup>32</sup> This wage differential was justified in part by the assumption that women worked out of inclination, to earn money for luxuries, rather than out of necessity. However, many women, including the unmarried and those who had been widowed or abandoned or whose husbands were unable or unwilling to earn a living wage, entered the waged marketplace to support themselves and often other family members as well. In those households, a working woman’s wages meant the difference between survival and starvation.

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30. “Still Out,” *Gazette*, 10/24/1898. Factory employers often required workers to purchase supplies needed in the course of their employment. Garment workers, for example, often had to buy their own needles, thread, and occasionally even sewing machines. Workers resented these charges against their wages and at times included the elimination of such deductions in strike demands. See Tentler, *Wage-Earning Women*, 23–24; Susan Levine, “‘Honor Each Noble Maid’: Women Workers and the Yonkers Carpet Weavers’ Strike of 1885,” *New York History* 62 (1981), 153–76; Barbara Speas Havira, “Dwindling into Failure: The International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union Strike in Kalamazoo, 1912,” *Michigan Academician* 20 (1988), 397–415; Kornacki, “Revealing Division,” 367–68.

31. Philip S. Foner, *Women and the American Labor Movement: From Colonial Times to the Eve of World War I* (New York, 1979), 236–37.

32. Ruth Milkman, “Organizing the Sexual Division of Labor: Historical Perspectives on ‘Women’s Work’ and the American Labor Movement,” *Socialist Review* 49 (Jan.–Feb. 1980), 116.

Wages represented an important issue for women workers nationwide, but female employees also expressed concerns about issues of personal dignity. Like the wrappers in Cedar Rapids, women workers at a Pittsburgh pickle plant resented being forced to spend four hours each Saturday on their hands and knees, scrubbing the tables and floor in their work space.<sup>33</sup> In the 1909–1910 New York shirtwaist strike, striking women’s grievances included unsanitary working conditions, sexual harassment, and a lack of dressing rooms in which workers could hang their coats and hats.<sup>34</sup> Female workers demanded reasonable wages and the recognition of their human dignity.

The Cedar Rapids cereal workers’ demands, like those of female strikers elsewhere, highlighted two key areas of concern. The first grievances listed dealt with wage levels and economic insecurity. By claiming higher wages and more regular hours, the strikers positioned themselves as legitimate wage earners who deserved “living wages.”<sup>35</sup> At a time when society viewed women workers as marginal industrial employees and temporary members of the workforce, the striking wrappers demanded recognition as serious, industrious laborers who deserved fair compensation from their employer. In addition to wage concerns, the strikers also expressed the desire to be treated as responsible adults. Company policies that implied that the wrappers might sneak away from their posts or that they would negligently damage company property relegated the women to the status of children in need of company management’s paternalistic guidance and discipline. By calling for an end to such regulations, the strikers implicitly demanded respect as conscientious, mature human beings.

In addition to reporting on the strikers’ concerns, the *Gazette* also reported a conversation with an unnamed former male employee of the cereal company who shared gendered grievances at odds with those articulated by the female wrappers. Although he acknowledged his support for the striking women, the male respondent largely ignored their demands in his assessment of

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33. Foner, *Women and the American Labor Movement*, 260.

34. Enstad, *Ladies of Labor*, 140–41.

35. “They Take Action,” *Gazette*, 10/27/1898.

the company. He did argue that the mill should either pay higher wages or guarantee employees steadier employment throughout the year, but then he turned his attention to demands for better treatment of long-term, aged employees, denounced the employment of women in jobs formerly reserved for men, and decried the company's policy of deducting accident insurance premiums from employees' paychecks.<sup>36</sup> Comparing these concerns to those expressed by the striking women demonstrates that male and female workers experienced the workplace in gendered ways. Young female workers generally viewed their stint in the paid workforce as temporary and so did not feel threatened by company mistreatment of long-term employees. In addition, women workers most likely would not have participated in company-sponsored benefits such as insurance plans. The target market for accident insurance, which in the event of accidental death or injury indemnified workers and their families for lost or diminished wages, was the male head of household.<sup>37</sup> Even if deemed eligible for such coverage, women workers would likely have been unwilling or unable to have insurance premiums deducted from their already low wages. As women, the strikers faced gender-specific struggles in the workplace, and their demands expressed concerns that varied from those of male workers.

In the *Gazette's* report of the strikers' demands, the strikers' representative took advantage of the opportunity offered by the sympathetic *Gazette* reporter to publicly state the strikers' case and gain community support for the strike. The unnamed interviewed striker was careful to lay the blame for the dispute at the feet of manager George McDonald, who had recently joined the company, and to point out that the strikers had no complaint against their direct supervisor, foreman Thomas Bithray. The strikers expressed particularly harsh condemnation of McDonald, claiming that he "has tried to make slaves of us" by asking the women to work on Sundays and asserting that "no man under [McDonald] dare say that his soul is his own if he wants to hold

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36. "Expert Opinion," *Gazette*, 10/25/1898.

37. George E. McNeill, *A Study of Accidents and Accident Insurance* (Boston, 1900); Robert Whaples and David Buffum, "Fraternalism, Paternalism, the Family, and the Market: Insurance a Century Ago," *Social Sciences History* 15 (1991), 97-122.

his job." As a new addition to the company, McDonald was not yet an established member of the community, unlike Bithray, who had been employed as foreman for at least three years.<sup>38</sup> The women may have hoped to gain more public sympathy by focusing their complaints on a relative stranger and his new and allegedly unreasonable regulations. By carefully explaining the reasons behind their demands and positioning those demands as a rational response to the unfair policies instituted by a new manager unfamiliar with company and community mores, the women hoped to elicit support from the citizens of Cedar Rapids.

IN THEIR APPEAL for public sympathy, the strikers benefited from the *Gazette's* supportive coverage of the strikers' demands, a stance that stemmed at least in part from editor F. W. Faulkes' opposition to the tax exemptions granted to the American Cereal Company. Faulkes, a one-time Republican, had abandoned the party in 1893 after disagreeing with local Republican leaders; thereafter Faulkes adopted an independent, often pro-Democratic, stance.<sup>39</sup> Faulkes did not initially oppose the Republican-led city government's approval of the company's 1895 petition for tax exemption, but in the following three years the *Gazette's* coverage became increasingly negative.<sup>40</sup>

In early 1896 Faulkes editorialized against the city's ceding to "the oat meal trust" a "free gift of \$7,000," the granting of which required an increase in taxes levied against other businesses and individual property owners in the city.<sup>41</sup> Two years later, the *Gazette* ran a series of articles, complete with tables of statistics com-

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38. Thornton, *History of the Quaker Oats Company*, 212; "Still Out," *Gazette*, 10/24/1898; "Iowa State Census 1895," <https://familysearch.org> (accessed February 2014). Bithray seems to have developed a good working relationship with the women in his department. The *Gazette* reported that on Christmas Eve, 1895, the "young ladies of the packing department of the oatmeal mills surprised their foreman, Mr. Bithray, with a writing desk, etc." See "The City in Brief," *Gazette*, 12/26/1895.

39. Brewer, *History of Linn County*, 116.

40. "Taxes Are Rebated," *Gazette*, 5/22/1895; "Something about City Matters!" *Gazette*, 2/29/1896; "Large Interests," *Gazette*, 1/24/1898; "American Cereal Company," *Gazette*, 2/4/1898; "Large Interests," *Gazette*, 2/12/1898; "Home Owners," *Gazette*, 2/26/1898.

41. "Something about City Matters!" *Gazette*, 2/29/1896.



**American Cereal Company.**

City Valuation, 1894.....\$90,100  
 City Tax, 1894.....\$720.80  
 City Valuation, 1897.....\$65,100  
 City Tax, 1897.....\$000.00

**WHO PAYS IT?**

**GOD BLESS OUR HOMES, THIS LIST OF HOMES PAID IT.**

	OUT TAX 1897	OUT TAX 1897	FOR A. C. CO.
T. S. Allen	16 00	1 40	
C. E. Andrews	17 00	1 20	
H. D. Bant	16 00	1 00	
Mrs. M. M. Bradley	32 00	6 00	
Mrs. C. Boyer	37 00	6 00	
G. W. Beyer	83 00	10 00	
W. Benth estate	14 00	2 00	
Mrs. S. Bensch	8 00	1 00	
H. B. Benth estate	14 00	2 00	
Mrs. Mary Baxter	12 00	1 50	
A. G. Bick	16 00	2 00	
Wm. B. Bick	16 00	2 00	
H. P. Britton	15 00	1 50	
W. J. Burd	29 00	4 00	
Mrs. H. V. Bennett	24 00	3 00	
Joseph Bremer	11 20	1 40	
S. Boush	76 00	14 00	
Mrs. E. C. Chambers	61 00	8 00	
Frank Council	8 00	1 00	
C. E. Clark	32 00	4 00	
H. A. Condit	12 00	1 50	
J. M. Doolittle	43 20	5 40	
S. H. Dix	25 00	3 00	
Mrs. Jane De Camp	7 20	1 00	
John Deane estate	16 00	2 00	
E. C. Dejeu	19 20	2 40	
E. F. Erickson	22 00	2 80	
Mrs. A. L. Frances	14 00	1 80	
A. H. Finley	44 00	5 50	
S. G. McClelland	23 00	3 00	
Mrs. C. Foster	24 00	3 00	
Mrs. L. Hildebrand	32 00	4 00	
Thos. Jones	13 00	1 60	
C. E. Jensen	28 00	3 50	
H. E. Johnson	16 00	2 00	
Mrs. J. Kowalski	27 00	3 40	
Frank Komba	9 00	1 10	
Chas. Kuchert	9 00	1 10	
J. B. Moore	24 00	3 00	
Mrs. E. Morris	32 00	4 00	
H. L. Messer	5 00	0 60	
T. C. Manger	36 00	4 50	
A. Hillme	15 20	1 90	
L. M. Rich	33 00	4 10	
Mrs. H. A. Sanford	8 00	1 00	
J. W. Smith	11 00	1 40	
Mrs. H. B. Sidsany	12 00	1 50	
Frank Soukup	35 00	4 40	
John Swain	15 00	1 80	
Saml. K. Tracy	11 20	1 40	
Mrs. Nancy Tamm	28 00	3 50	
J. M. Thayer	19 20	2 40	
Wm. H. Taylor	24 00	3 00	
Maude Lohr	4 00	0 50	
Ed. Victoria	7 20	0 90	
J. M. North	14 00	1 70	
L. M. Vender	14 00	1 70	
Mrs. Kate Vostre	9 00	1 10	
Joseph Vavra	9 00	1 10	
H. A. Wallace	25 00	3 20	
Mrs. Anna White	17 00	2 10	
F. Wolcott	22 00	2 80	
C. E. Weston	11 00	1 40	
P. Wobley	16 00	2 00	
P. Wobley	5 00	0 60	
Malcolm Smith	52 00	6 70	
S. C. Knox	27 00	3 40	
James Maloney	28 00	3 50	
Frank Jones	24 00	3 00	
John L. Krelle	23 00	2 90	
Gib. Hunt	23 00	2 90	
Mrs. Flora Mills	83 00	10 70	
Mrs. A. Burdick	exempt	1 00	
Mrs. Anna Stanek	exempt	1 00	
Mrs. Ann Curran	exempt	1 00	
Mrs. Kate Hilda	exempt	2 00	
Mrs. Anna Hilde	exempt	2 00	
Mrs. Anna Kremer	exempt	2 00	
Mrs. Mary Knoch	exempt	4 00	
Mrs. Fanny Klement	exempt	2 00	
Mrs. Mary Vavra	exempt	2 00	
Mrs. Mary Voss	exempt	1 00	
Mrs. E. McDaniel	exempt	1 00	
Mrs. C. McCall	exempt	1 00	
Mrs. Anna Nemes	exempt	1 00	
Mrs. Joe Norvay	exempt	1 00	
Mrs. W. C. Schaefer	exempt	1 00	

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From Cedar Rapids Gazette, 2/4/1898.

paring county and city valuations and taxes paid by some of the city's largest corporations. Although the articles addressed city tax policy generally, prominently situated in each report was an image of Lady Justice holding scales balancing on one side the taxes paid by the American Cereal Company prior to 1895 and on the other increased taxes levied against businesses and home owners to make up the lost revenue resulting from the cereal company's post-1895 tax exemptions.<sup>42</sup> In one such article, included under the headline "Oat Meal Mill Exemptions" was the phrase "God help the rich, the poor can beg" followed by several blank lines upon which, Faulkes explained, "readers of *The Gazette* can write their sentiments on this matter."<sup>43</sup> This appeal to his readership indicates that Faulkes perceived, or hoped to generate, significant public opposition to the cereal company's tax exempt status.

During the strike, Faulkes drew connections between the striking women's grievances and the city's tax policy. He argued that one reason the city council decided to exempt the company from taxation was company managers' promise to provide good jobs and steady employment for the city's citizens. Instead, Faulkes asserted, the company paid "starvation wages" to its female employees, wages too low to cover the necessities of life. In addition, working-class families' net incomes had suffered since "the people who own modest homes, people who may have daughters among the strikers," faced stiffer tax levies to make up for city revenue lost through the cereal company's tax exemptions.<sup>44</sup> American Cereal Company workers' finances took a double hit when the company paid low wages and the city taxed them at a higher rate to recover lost tax revenue.

Faulkes's support of the strikers did not stem entirely from his disagreement with Republican Party politics and opposition to American Cereal Company's tax exempt status but also from his support for young women laborers, expressed in earlier editions of the *Gazette*. In response to a deprecatory reference to waitresses as "biscuit shooters" made by a young man in a local restaurant, Faulkes defended "hard-working girls, earning an

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42. *Gazette*, 2/4/1898, 2/5/1898, 2/7/1898, 2/12/1898.

43. "Oat Meal Mill Exemptions," *Gazette*, 2/4/1898.

44. "The Strike and Other Things," *Gazette*, 10/26/1898.

honest living, perhaps assisting in the support of their families" and compared their "ennobling" labor to the indolence of those "who live upon the cake and pie furnished by their fathers."<sup>45</sup> During the strike, Faulkes noted that most of the "girls" employed by the cereal company were young women, many of whom had been with the company for many years. A number of the women, Faulkes pointed out, worked out of necessity, to support themselves and perhaps other dependents, not so they could "indulge in luxuries."<sup>46</sup> Women, Faulkes argued, had the same right as men to a living wage.<sup>47</sup>

Support for female wage equality was rare in an era when many working men and their allies viewed women's employment as a serious threat to men's ability to earn a "family wage," a level of earnings that would allow the male head of household to serve as sole breadwinner. According to Carroll Wright, the U.S. Commissioner of Labor in 1888, women who worked for "small pay, needing money only for dress or pleasure," helped to lower the wages of all workers.<sup>48</sup> Faulkes recognized that many young women pursued waged employment out of need; his political leanings and respect for women's labor ensured a public platform for the striking women's grievances.<sup>49</sup>

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45. "Only a Biscuit Shooter," *Gazette*, 8/13/1885.

46. "The Strike and Other Things," *Gazette*, 10/26/1898.

47. Faulkes's mother, Ann, provided a powerful example of the necessity of women's labor in the face of family tragedy. In 1870, 15-year-old Faulkes lived with his English immigrant parents in Dane County, Wisconsin: father, James, listed in federal census records as a "farmer," and his mother, Ann, recorded by the census enumerator as "keeping house." Ten years later, only Ann appeared in federal census records, as a widow and now identified with the occupation of "farmer." With the death of James Faulkes, Ann took on the responsibility of farm management, assisted by a hired farm hand and a servant. His mother's experiences likely influenced Faulkes's stance on working women. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Federal Census (1870, 1880), <http://0-persi.heritagequestonline.com>.

48. Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work*, 100.

49. The other major daily Cedar Rapids newspaper, the *Cedar Rapids Daily Republican*, also expressed support for the striking women but provided less detailed coverage of their grievances and actions. The *Republican's* editor called the women's demands both "reasonable" and "right" but called for arbitration of the workers' grievances rather than a "hurtful strike." See "The Oatmeal Mill Strike," *Cedar Rapids Daily Republican* (hereafter cited as *Republican*), 10/27/1898; "The Strike Ended," *Republican*, 10/28/1898.

The *Gazette's* favorable coverage continued on October 25, when it characterized the women's ransacking of the wrapping room as a "little harmless fun." After the strikers had met with McDonald and been told once again that the company would not meet their demands, the women proceeded to their former workroom where they accosted the "children" and "married women" the company had employed to replace the strikers. The women used their former work area as a space in which to demonstrate their solidarity and commitment to their cause. In addition to overturning paste pans and opening packages of oatmeal, the strikers subjected some of the replacement workers to "a tongue lashing they will not forget in a day." The strikers' verbal harangue encouraged some strikebreakers to leave their work tables and join the strikers' ranks.<sup>50</sup>

THE WOMEN'S DISRUPTION of wrapping operations also got McDonald's attention. Arriving at the wrapping room, he sought to quell the disturbance by explaining that his superiors refused to consider the women's demand for higher wages, but he did offer to abolish the system of fining employees for torn labels and to reduce their workload by rescinding the order that wrappers clean their work spaces at the end of the day. The strikers refused McDonald's offer and pressed for a wage increase. They also rejected his suggestion that a forewoman from the Akron plant travel to Cedar Rapids to teach the women to wrap packages more quickly, fearing that such a move would reflect negatively on their local foreman's training and managerial skills.<sup>51</sup>

The young female strikers refused to be intimidated by company management and claimed the right to make their case in the very space where they felt their labor had been unfairly appropriated. The women rejected McDonald's offer to settle the strike on terms that did not address their key demands. In addition, as the *Gazette* reported, the strikers "asked the manager some very pertinent questions," including why he could always get an immediate answer from his superiors on any question not related

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50. "Could Not Agree," *Gazette*, 10/25/1898.

51. *Ibid.*

to a wage increase “while it takes days and even weeks to get an answer regarding their demands.”<sup>52</sup> The striking women claimed the right to negotiate as equals with management and refused to surrender their demands despite management’s opposition.

The experienced wrappers also rebuffed McDonald’s paternalistic efforts to “teach” them to be better and more efficient workers. Throughout the strike, female strikers positioned themselves as skilled workers and portrayed McDonald as an inexperienced manager who did not understand their craft. That the women took pride in their work and their identification as wrappers is evidenced by the comments of the unnamed strikers’ representative in the *Gazette’s* initial account of the strikers’ grievances. The very first concern addressed by the unnamed striker was not wages or working conditions but the strikers’ identity as workers: “We want first to correct the impression that the 135 girls who walked out Saturday afternoon were packers. We were ‘wrappers.’”<sup>53</sup> The experienced female workers contested McDonald’s new wrapping procedure because it was inefficient and unnecessarily time-consuming. All accounts of company efforts to replace the strikers noted the strikebreakers’ inexperience and inability to get the job done, which forced the mill to incur the extra expense of sending train-carloads of packages to Chicago for wrapping. The women took pride in their work and resented McDonald’s heavy-handed and ill-conceived attempts to arbitrarily alter their work patterns and his disregard for the value of their skill and expertise. The wrappers’ valuation of their work as a skilled craft may have helped strengthen their resolve to strike and their commitment to achieving their goals.<sup>54</sup>

After the striking women ransacked the wrapping room, company management refused them further access, forcing the women to switch tactics. On the evening of October 25 and the

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52. Ibid.

53. “Still Out,” *Gazette*, 10/24/1898.

54. Dorothy Sue Cobble found a similar assertion of skilled craftsmanship among waitresses. Like the wrappers in Cedar Rapids, waitresses acquired most of their training and experience on the job, and the larger society viewed the work of both groups as unskilled. Waitresses’ self-evaluation as skilled craftswomen, Cobble argues, helped provide a strong basis for union organization among waitresses. See Cobble, *Dishing It Out*.

morning of October 26, groups of strikers congregated outside the mill and remonstrated with the workers who had been hired to take their place. The *Gazette* reported that two-thirds of the 60 strikebreakers were girls under the age of 14. In the pages of the *Gazette*, the striking women invited mothers and fathers of the young strikebreakers to attend the strikers' meeting that evening. The women hoped to convince the parents of the reasonableness of the strikers' demands and to persuade them to keep their children out of the mill. The strikers had already contacted the county attorney's office regarding the legality of employing such young workers, but at that time, the state's child labor laws applied only to work in coal mines, and no compulsory education statute existed to force children out of the mill and into the classroom.<sup>55</sup> Creative and resourceful, the striking women used a variety of tactics to keep strikebreakers out of the wrapping room and the cereal company on the defensive.

The war of words between the strikers and McDonald continued, and, for the first time, questions of ethnic distinctions entered the rhetorical battle. McDonald claimed that the strike would not interfere with the mill's business, purportedly stating that he could hire as many replacement workers as needed since "the Bohemians are easy" and "will not stand out with the others."<sup>56</sup> As a newcomer to the city, McDonald may have expressed these sentiments without realizing the strength of the Bohemian community. The strikers used McDonald's comments to intensify support for their cause; the *Gazette* reported that the strikers "have not only taken exception to the slur upon them but assert that . . . they will stay out [until] . . . their demands are acceded to."<sup>57</sup>

In its defense of the striking women's ethnic reputations, the *Gazette* noted that "there are a number of representatives of eminently respectable Bohemian families" among them. That observation was validated when the names of the strike leaders became public the next day. Until October 27, none of the strikers had been identified by name in newspaper reports. On that day,

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55. "Strike Still On," *Gazette*, 10/26/1898; "The Strike Spreads," *Republican*, 10/27/1898; Frederick Emory Haynes, "Child Labor Legislation in Iowa," in *Applied History*, ed. Benjamin F. Shambaugh, 6 vols. (Iowa City, 1912-1930), 2:591.

56. "Strike Still On," *Gazette*, 10/26/1898.

57. *Ibid.*

the *Gazette* reported on the strikers' mass meeting held the previous evening, which had been called to order by wrapper Myrtle Gallagher. The room in which the strikers met was "filled . . . to suffocation" with striking women, "many of the male employees in other departments and a large number of friends and sympathizers." Gallagher's audience responded jubilantly when she announced that two of McDonald's superiors from the Chicago office would arrive in Cedar Rapids the following day. The strikers hoped to carry their grievances over McDonald's head and gain satisfaction from his bosses.<sup>58</sup>

They did not, however, intend to simply rely on company management's good will. Striker Katie Molloy offered a motion to appoint a committee of five strikers to meet with the city council to request that city leaders rescind the American Cereal Company's tax exempt status, a move designed to exert financial pressure on the company. After the assembled strikers unanimously adopted the proposed motion, Gallagher appointed to that committee Lillie Molloy, Libbie Letovsky, Addie Searles, Maggie Carroll, and Mary Poduska.<sup>59</sup>

THE YOUNG WOMEN who emerged as strike leaders were a diverse group.<sup>60</sup> All were single women in their teens or twenties; the youngest was 16-year-old Myrtle Gallagher and the oldest was Lillie Molloy, at age 28.<sup>61</sup> Lillie Molloy had been employed

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58. *Ibid.*; "They Take Action," *Gazette*, 10/27/1898.

59. "They Take Action," *Gazette*, 10/27/1898.

60. Of the women named in the *Gazette* report only one, Katie Molloy, could not be traced through state or federal census records or city directories. It is possible that it was Lillie Molloy, misidentified as Katie in the *Gazette* story, who offered the motion to meet with city leaders to contest the company's tax-exempt status.

61. Federal Census (1900); "Iowa State Census, 1895," <https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1803957>; "Iowa State Census, 1885," <https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1803643>. In federal and state census records and city directories, Lillie Molloy was alternately listed as Lillie, Lill, Lizzie, and Elizabeth. At age 16, Gallagher was the youngest of the strike leaders and also their chairwoman. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was not unusual for young women to play leadership roles in the labor movement. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, who later became a prominent organizer for the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), gave her first public speech on socialism at age 16 and began a nationwide speaking tour for the IWW one year later. Fannia Cohn became an active member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party in Belarus at age 16 before immigrating to the United States and working as a labor

at the American Cereal Company for at least eight years; the others were more recent hires, having been with the company for one to three years.<sup>62</sup> Addie Searles had worked as a domestic and Maggie Carroll had been employed at a cracker factory before being hired at the oatmeal mill; there is no record that the other women had worked elsewhere before joining the cereal company.<sup>63</sup>

Of those women whose living arrangements are documented, two lived in households with two parents and siblings, two lived with widowed mothers and siblings, one lived with her father and brother, and one lived alone.<sup>64</sup> Among these six women, at least three appear to have made significant, if not the sole, contribution to their families' income. In addition, three of the six women lived in households in which other family members were employed at the American Cereal Company.<sup>65</sup> Family members familiar with the companies' employment practices may have tended to support the striking women's cause. On the other hand, fathers and brothers employed at the mill may have worried that a striking family member's militant stand against the company would put their own job at risk.

The female strike leaders also varied in their ethnic background. Addie Searles was the only one in the group who had been born in the United States to U.S.-born parents.<sup>66</sup> The other strike leaders had ties to immigrant groups in the city. Maggie Carroll had been born in Ireland and emigrated to the United States with her family when she was eight years old.<sup>67</sup> Both Myrtle

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organizer for the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. See Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, *The Rebel Girl: An Autobiography, My First Life (1906-1926)*, rev. ed. (New York, 1973); Annelise Orleck, *Common Sense and a Little Fire: Women and Working-Class Politics in the United States, 1900-1965* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1995).

62. Cedar Rapids City Directories (1880-1888), 1888-01-01, Digital Archives of the Marion Public Library, <http://mpl.newspaperarchive.com/1880-1889>; Cedar Rapids City Directories (1890-1898), 1890-01-01, 1892-01-01, 1893-01-01, 1895-01-01, 1896-12-01, 1898-05-01, Digital Archives of the Marion Public Library, <http://mpl.newspaperarchive.com/1890-1899>.

63. Ibid.

64. Ibid.; Cedar Rapids City Directories (1900-1909), 1900-01-01, Digital Archives of the Marion Public Library, <http://mpl.newspaperarchive.com/1900-1909>.

65. Cedar Rapids City Directories (1890-1898), 1896-12-01, 1898-05-01.

66. "Iowa State Census, 1895"; Federal Census (1900).

67. Ibid.

Gallagher and Lillie Molloy were born in the United States to Irish immigrant parents.<sup>68</sup> Libbie Letovsky and Mary Poduska belonged to the city's Bohemian community; both were Iowa-born offspring of Bohemian immigrant parents.<sup>69</sup>

Both occupational and social ties bound together the diverse group of female strike leaders. Myrtle Gallagher, Maggie Carroll, and Lillie Molloy shared a common circle of friends. Prior to the strike, all three women attended parties with mutual acquaintances.<sup>70</sup> A number of the other attendees at those social gatherings also worked at the American Cereal Company. Friendships formed inside the factory and out helped bind together the striking wrappers.

Altogether, the larger group of striking women workers exhibited some characteristics at odds with those of the strike leaders. The 1898 Cedar Rapids city directory listed 111 nonclerical and nonsupervisory female employees of the American Cereal Company, a number very close to the reported 100 striking wrappers.<sup>71</sup> Although it is likely that the company's roster of female employees changed somewhat between May 1898, when the directory was printed, and the October strike, an analysis of the characteristics of the 111 identified women workers at the company represents a relatively accurate group portrait of the striking wrappers.<sup>72</sup> The average age of this group of female employees was slightly less than 18 years, with three-quarters under the

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68. *Ibid.*

69. *Ibid.* Libbie Letovsky was the daughter of Bohumil Letovsky, one of the Letovsky brothers who published the Bohemian-language newspaper *Slovan Americký* in Cedar Rapids. Libbie's uncle J. M. B. Letovsky was elected to the state legislature in 1890. See *ibid.*; Rudiš-Jičínský, "The Bohemians in Linn County, Iowa," 210; Shimek, "The Bohemians in Johnson County."

70. "The City in Brief," *Gazette*, 5/12/1892; "A Surprise Party," *Gazette*, 10/11/1897; "A Dancing Party," *Gazette*, 10/18/1897.

71. Of the 111 women listed in the city directory, only six could not be traced through state or federal census records.

72. The identity of the vast majority of the striking wrappers cannot be determined since newspaper reports identified only the strike leaders by name. Although accounts of the strike emphasized the women's unity, there were nevertheless cracks in the strikers' solidarity. On October 26, the *Gazette* reported that four of the strikers had gone back to work in order to teach strikebreakers how to wrap oatmeal packages, demonstrating that at least some of the cereal company's female employees did not actively support the wrappers' strike.

age of 20. The directory identified only one woman with the title "Mrs.," indicating that virtually all of the company's female employees were unmarried. Although women from the city's Irish immigrant community made up half of the strike leadership, that group represented only 9 percent of the company's total female workforce. Seventy-four percent of the female employees resided in two-parent households, compared with only 33 percent of the strike leaders. The women who emerged as strike leaders were much more likely to live in households where their earnings represented a more significant share of total income and may have taken on leadership roles in part out of a greater sense of responsibility for family support.<sup>73</sup>

For those female cereal company employees who lived in male-headed households, their fathers' occupations may shed some light on the wrappers' familiarity with the strategies of organized labor.<sup>74</sup> Half of the company's women workers had fathers employed either as craftsmen or by one of the city's railways. Those two groups of workers had historically high levels of union membership.<sup>75</sup> By the turn of the century, union locals had been established in Cedar Rapids for carpenters, locomotive firemen, railway conductors, switchmen, machinists, and stone masons, all occupational groups in which female cereal workers' fathers were employed.<sup>76</sup> The women wrappers undoubtedly heard discussions of union goals and tactics in their homes and at community events, and that familiarity with the principles of organized labor likely influenced the strategies they employed during the strike.

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73. Cedar Rapids City Directories (1890–1898), 1898-05-01; "Iowa State Census, 1895"; Federal Census (1900).

74. Of those female cereal company employees who could be identified in census records, only two lived in households in which their mothers were identified as being employed outside the home.

75. For a discussion of railroad workers' involvement with organized labor, see Shelton Stromquist, *A Generation of Boomers: The Pattern of Railroad Labor Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America* (Urbana, IL, 1987).

76. "Great Growth of Labor Union Locals," *Republican*, 1/7/1903. I could find no evidence that directly tied parents or other family members of the strike leaders to organized labor. In addition, although the *Gazette* reported that the "strikers have won the sympathy of all who have heard the story of their demands" ("Still Out," *Gazette*, 10/24/1898), I could find no evidence that any labor unions in Cedar Rapids publicly expressed support for the wrappers' strike.

AT THE STRIKERS' MEETING on October 26, the committee of five women appointed by chairwoman Myrtle Gallagher was charged with presenting to the mayor and city council the following petition:

In view of the recent action of the management of the local mill of the American Cereal company, in refusing to grant our just demands, we, the undersigned representatives . . . of the striking employes of that company, and in pursuance to a resolution adopted at a mass meeting . . . hereby petition your honorable body to rescind the resolution by which the property of said company was exempted from all taxation for a period of ten years.<sup>77</sup>

The *Gazette* reported that the motion to adopt "was passed with rousing cheers," and the committee of five immediately made arrangements to meet with the mayor, setting an appointment by telephone to confer with him in his offices at 8:30 the following morning. The meeting ended with several strikers urging the women to "hold together to the last." After the strikers decided to meet outside the mill at 7:00 the next morning to discourage strikebreakers, Gallagher urged her fellow wrappers to refrain from violence or any public demonstrations that might serve to undermine community sympathy.<sup>78</sup>

Petitioning the city council to rescind the American Cereal Company's tax-exempt status was a bold and creative strategy on the part of the strikers. The women drew on public antipathy to city tax policy to emphasize the size and economic strength of the mill in opposition to their own position as underpaid wage earners and members of individual tax-paying households. They hoped to strengthen public support for their cause through peaceful protest that highlighted Cedar Rapids citizens' vulnerability to the political clout of such a large corporation. In addition, the strikers hoped to put significant financial pressure on the company by threatening its tax-favored status. In 1894, before the city council had granted its petition for tax exemption, the American Cereal Company had paid \$720.80 in city taxes.<sup>79</sup> Any improvements made by the company during the succeeding four years would have further

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77. "They Take Action," *Gazette*, 10/27/1898.

78. *Ibid.*

79. "American Cereal Company," *Gazette*, 2/7/1898.

increased the mill's assessed value and associated annual property taxes. The strikers' threat was not an empty one. According to the *Cedar Rapids Daily Republican*, the council's 1895 resolution to exempt the company from taxation was illegal; any taxpayer in the city could file a petition requesting assessment of the American Cereal Company's property for taxation.<sup>80</sup>

The young women strikers chose to pressure the company through city political offices even though, as women, they were not eligible to vote in city elections. They claimed their rights as citizens to bring their grievances before elected officials and expected the mayor and city council members to be responsive to their concerns. Denied the right to directly influence city politics through the ballot box despite their status as wage earners and taxpayers, they nevertheless attempted to shape city tax policy through petitions and public sentiment.<sup>81</sup>

On the afternoon of October 28, the women got to state their case in a meeting with three officials from the mill's Chicago headquarters: J. A. Arbogast, Otis Hower, and Ed Mower.<sup>82</sup> Prior to the meeting, Arbogast boasted to a *Gazette* reporter that he "would make the girls laugh at themselves" and convince them to accept the company's terms. Arbogast opened the conference with the strikers' committee by telling the women they were foolish and assuring them that "only ignorant and illiterate people like Bohemians, Poles, Finns, Welsh, [and] Italians . . . ever strike any more." Whether Arbogast understood the ethnic composition of the committee is not known, but his remarks failed to impress the strikers. He then offered to pay the women wrappers \$1.00 per day for 12 days, after which time they were to return to work at the old wage scale. That proposal was intended to provide the women with a guaranteed daily wage until they learned the new wrapping procedure. As the *Gazette* reported, however, the strikers' representa-

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80. "The Strike Spreads," *Republican*, 10/27/1898.

81. Women in Iowa had very limited voting rights in 1898. In 1894 the state's General Assembly granted women the privilege of voting only in those elections that involved the issuing of bonds, borrowing money, or increasing the tax levy. Not until the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920 did women in Iowa gain full voting rights. See Louise R. Noun, *Strong-Minded Women: The Emergence of the Woman-Suffrage Movement in Iowa* (Ames, 1969), 231, 260–61.

82. "The Strike Ended," *Republican*, 10/28/1898.

tives “flatly refused” the company’s offer and reiterated their commitment to pursue revision of the company’s tax status.<sup>83</sup>

After the afternoon’s impasse, company officials met with the strikers’ committee again that evening. Arbogast and Mower downplayed their concern over losing tax-exempt status, arguing that the company could easily afford to pay \$720 in annual city taxes. The strikers’ representatives countered that the two men “must think [the wrappers] had a poor idea of values” if they believed they could convince the strikers that “\$720 was all that they were likely to be compelled to pay” given the improvements made during the past three years.<sup>84</sup> After that rejoinder, Arbogast and Mower left the room to confer. When they returned, they agreed to the following concessions: a 14 percent raise for the new wrapping style; ending the requirement that the women clean the wrapping room after hours; abolition of fines for accidentally tearing wrappers or gluing packages together; new and larger tables in the wrapping room; and the installation of a conveyor belt system so that the women would no longer have to carry cereal packages to and from their work tables.<sup>85</sup> The settlement represented a favorable resolution of all the striking wrappers’ primary grievances.

Jubilant at their success, the women nevertheless took precautions to solidify their victory. They immediately drafted a letter

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83. “Girls Have Won Strike,” *Gazette*, 10/28/1898. In addition to the ethnic groups noted, Arbogast also used a racial epithet to include African Americans among the “ignorant and illiterate people” who continued to resort to strikes to settle labor disputes. By lumping together “undesirable” immigrant groups with African Americans, Arbogast suggested an ambiguous racial status for members of the city’s Bohemian community.

84. *Ibid.* Company officials may have been concerned that a challenge to the plant’s tax-exempt status might invalidate the original agreement, leading to an assessment of back taxes plus interest. The total value of the company’s ten-year tax exemption was equal to \$7,208, assuming no increase in assessment due to hikes in property values, a sum that would be equal to approximately \$200,000 in 2014. Company management may have also been anxious to avoid any adverse financial impact, no matter how small. During the summer and fall of 1898, a proxy battle was brewing over control of the American Cereal Company’s board of directors, and company officials may have been concerned about the effect that any financial loss could have on stock prices. For a discussion of the 1898 proxy battle, see Marquette, *Brands, Trademarks, and Good Will*, 73–77.

85. “Girls Have Won Strike,” *Gazette*, 10/28/1898.

to company management at the Chicago headquarters. The communiqué opened with a statement of “utmost confidence in the integrity and fairness of . . . foreman Mr. Thomas Bithray” and requested that he be retained as their supervisor. Perhaps anticipating backlash from McDonald, the women proactively praised Bithray to company management, staving off any anticipated attempt by McDonald to blame the foreman for the strike. The wrappers had a good working relationship with Bithray and wanted him to remain as a potential future ally and buffer between the women and McDonald. After their praise of Bithray, the women wrote, “We desire to express our most sincere appreciation of the concessions which the representatives of the company have made to us today with the hope that nothing may arise in the future to mar our relations. We would assure the management that we will at all times work for the best interests of the company and thereby best serve our own interests.” Here, the women extended an olive branch of conciliation after a period of contentious negotiation and sought to reestablish a sense of harmony with their employer. But they also put into writing the fact that company officials had conceded to their demands. Without listing the details, they nevertheless documented the existence of those concessions. To further cement their gains, the women sent a copy of the letter to McDonald, along with a note “assur[ing] him of their esteem and express[ing] the hope that in the future there would be no further difficulties.”<sup>86</sup>

LOCAL NEWSPAPERS hailed the end of the strike as a victory for the women workers. According to the *Gazette*, the wrappers secured “as much as they asked and more than they expected.” The paper credited their triumph to “the good judgment, strong will and excellent tact of the young ladies . . . to whom the management of their affairs was entrusted.” Similarly, the *Republican* praised the women for their “sensible” conduct and opined that “to the women themselves is due the welcome settlement — they were reasonable in their demands as well as right.”<sup>87</sup>

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86. Ibid.

87. Ibid; “The Strike Ended,” *Republican*, 10/28/1898.

Despite these accolades for the strikers and their victory, the strike's outcome left several issues unresolved. The cereal company's capitulation to the women's demands left open the question of its tax-exempt status. In May 1895 the city had exempted the American Cereal Company from taxation for a period of ten years. However, on March 8, 1905, before that term expired, the company suffered a devastating loss when its entire Cedar Rapids plant burned to the ground. Following that catastrophe, business leaders led the way in calling for a seven-year extension of the company's tax-favored status to encourage rebuilding of the mill in the city.<sup>88</sup>

Nor did the ending of the strike resolve the wrappers' vulnerability, as non-unionized workers, to future wage reductions or management's arbitrary introduction of additional duties or penalties. At least one of the strike leaders worked to change that situation. In 1902, four years after the wrappers' successful strike, Maggie Carroll, a member of the strikers' negotiating committee, helped organize Local 20 of the International Union of Flour and Cereal Mill Employees.<sup>89</sup> Local 20 was established as an organization for female workers at American Cereal Company; other locals were set up for male employees of the mill. The union proved to be popular among the wrappers. In 1903, 125 members of Local 20 marched in the city's Labor Day parade and won first prize for the "best appearing union," with three rose-festooned floats.<sup>90</sup> Local 20 also sponsored a women's drill team, established in 1904 and composed of some of the youngest members of the union.<sup>91</sup> In their handmade, colorful uniforms, the drill team performed at the city's 1904 Labor Day celebration and other union events, executing "fancy evolutions" and carrying lettered placards with which they spelled out "Demand the Label."<sup>92</sup>

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88. "Board Will Hold Special Session," *Gazette*, 3/8/1905.

89. "Great Growth of Labor Union Locals," *Republican*, 1/7/1903. I could find no evidence that any cereal company employees organized unions before 1902.

90. "Labor Hosts Celebrate," *Gazette*, 9/7/1903; "Rain at Night Marred Program," *Gazette*, 9/9/1903.

91. "Mill Workers' New Drill Team," *Gazette*, 8/19/1904. According to the *Gazette*, all the team members were under the age of 16.

92. *Ibid.*; "Big Crowd at Union Park," *Gazette*, 9/5/1904; "State Federation President Here," *Gazette*, 10/19/1904.

Maggie Carroll served as one of the drill team leaders, helping to instill union principles of solidarity in some of the local's newest members.<sup>93</sup> In addition, she was elected as a delegate to the union's 1904 international convention, held in Cedar Rapids, and was appointed to the convention's Constitution Committee.<sup>94</sup> Through the establishment of Local 20, Carroll and other women unionists attempted to institutionalize a network of female mill employees, one that could help secure the gains the wrappers had achieved in 1898.

THE WOMEN who walked out of the American Cereal Company on October 22, 1898, faced great odds. In a dual-front battle, they leveraged their courage and solidarity against one of the largest, most politically powerful companies in the city and also against societal attitudes that rarely took seriously the concerns of female workers. By embracing the techniques of organized labor and using a variety of tactics to keep mill management on the defensive, the striking wrappers demanded and received support from their community and from city leaders. Like women workers elsewhere in the United States, the young women in Cedar Rapids sought not only higher wages and economic security but also dignity and respect as skilled workers. The female mill employees' ability to negotiate a successful conclusion to the strike demonstrates some of the specific advantages they enjoyed as workers in a small industrial city, including established social networks among a relatively small group of female employees;

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93. "Mill Workers' New Drill Team," *Gazette*, 8/19/1904.

94. "International Convention of Flour and Cereal Mill Employees," *Gazette*, 6/20/1904; "Resolutions are Adopted," *Gazette*, 6/21/1904. Carroll's union career was short-lived. In August 1904 she married Robert Steel, and the couple moved to a farm to start a family. See "Marriage Licenses," *Gazette*, 8/24/1904; "Iowa State Census, 1925," Ancestry.com, <http://search.ancestrylibrary.com/>, accessed 3/14/2014. None of the other strike leaders appear to have become involved in Local 20 or other labor movements in the city. The strikers' chairwoman, Myrtle Gallagher, left the American Cereal Company less than two months after the strike's end to take a position as a clerk at a dry goods store. See "Personal," *Gazette*, 12/10/1898. Another strike committee member, Lizzie Molloy, also was no longer employed at the mill by the end of the year. Molloy married L. M. Shields on December 26, 1898, and subsequently left the paid workforce. See "All Iowa, Select Marriages, 1809-1992," Ancestry.com, accessed 3/14/2014; Cedar Rapids City Directories (1900-1909), 1901-01-01.

the ability to single out a new manager, a recognized stranger in the community, as responsible for newly implemented and unreasonable work demands; and widespread community concern over the American Cereal Company's perceived unfair manipulation of city tax policy. The female strikers recognized and shrewdly took advantage of opportunities to sway public opinion in their favor and paint McDonald as an unfair taskmaster. By so doing, they forced company management to listen seriously to their concerns and take steps to improve their conditions of labor, a feat attempted in the late nineteenth century by few other women workers and achieved by fewer still.

# Hollywood in the Heartland: A Review Essay

BARBARA CHING

*The Book of Iowa Films*, by Marty S. Knepper and John Shelton Lawrence. Berkeley, California, and Sioux City, Iowa: The Book of Iowa Films Press, 2014. x, 272 pp. Illustrations, bibliographic references, appendixes, index of Iowa films. \$25.95 paperback.

*Hollywood in the Heartland*, exhibit curated by Leo Landis. Des Moines: State Historical Museum of Iowa, June 27, 2014–December 2016.

WE NOT ONLY GROW POPCORN in Iowa; the state has also proven to be fertile ground for the film industry. In *The Book of Iowa Films*, Marty Knepper and John Lawrence note that “research in well-indexed filmographies revealed that no comparably scaled body of films exists for our neighbors in Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska, Missouri, or South Dakota” (5). They hypothesize that Iowa earned its cinematic role as “the representative heartland state” (11) because it nurtured literary talent and welcomed filmmakers in search of settings for stories involving rural-urban conflicts, historical events, and nostalgic situations (5). In the process of cataloguing 410 films, they viewed as many as they could locate and conducted research in trade newspapers and published reviews to learn about the others. After extensive searches, they concluded that many of the oldest films simply no longer exist, although they speculate that some of the unseen films may eventually turn up under different titles. On the book’s website and blog, they update readers on films they have learned

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THE ANNALS OF IOWA 74 (Spring 2015). © The State Historical Society of Iowa, 2015.

about since publication and note that they self-published the current book because they knew a second edition would be necessary ([www.bookofiowafilms.com](http://www.bookofiowafilms.com)).

Self-publishing also allowed for a more idiosyncratic chapter structure than the typical academic book. The book has an introduction followed by five chapters and four appendixes. Chapter one lists all of the films chronologically and places each one into one of six categories: (1) fictional films set in Iowa; (2) historical films set in Iowa; (3) films about traveling Iowans; (4) Iowa documentaries (many of which are short films made for Iowa Public Television); (5) films made in Iowa although supposedly set elsewhere or nowhere in particular; and (6) films that mention Iowa. Chapter two takes up more than half the book; it repeats, rearranges, and expands chapter one's lists by grouping the films by category and summarizing all but the "Iowa mention" films. The index creates an alphabetical listing; there is no index of names or other items.

The listed films range from 1918, when *The Strange Woman*, the first film with an Iowa setting, was released, to 2013. The authors go on to divide the films by drawing a line between twentieth-century themes and new directions in the twenty-first century. The twentieth-century themes are "building the nation through agrarian virtue," "defending the nation," "magic pastoralism," "puncturing Iowa pastoralism and moralism," "Iowans who travel," "Iowa as a place to work," and "agrarian realist visions of Iowa." In the twenty-first century, new, more "realistic" (that is, less pastoral) themes and genres prevail, including social issues such as racism and food safety and forays into genres like horror and science fiction — although films touching on *Star Trek's* Captain Kirk, to be born in Riverside, Iowa, in 2228, have appeared since 1986 (*Star Trek IV*).

The categories used to structure the filmography vary in their usefulness and specificity. Although agriculture may play a more definitive role in Iowa than elsewhere, all states are places to work, and some residents of all states travel. The "Iowa mention" category currently lists 51 films, but since the authors hope to "be as comprehensive as possible" (223), diligent pursuit of this angle is likely to result in hundreds of further entries. As colleagues at Morningside College in Sioux City, Iowa, Knepper

and Lawrence have been researching and teaching about Iowa films since 1996, so they no doubt have posed and answered bigger questions than how to categorize films. Why study Iowa films at all? What understanding of the state and their lives did their students gain? Which films were most popular and which most polarizing? What nerves did they strike? I would like to learn more about why and how this body of film mattered to the original audiences and to the audience that Knepper and Lawrence hope to reach now.

More detailed discussions would also add meaning to the catalog. In Appendix C, the authors reprint an excellent essay they published in 2006, "World War II and Iowa: Hollywood's Pastoral Myth for the Nation," which demonstrates their ability to contextualize a handful of Iowa films in a way that shows their importance and their specific use of rural settings, especially the way rural settings are presumed to build strong, patriotic, self-sacrificing characters. Focusing on five films made from 1941 through 1946, the authors argue that presenting Iowans as model citizens built support for America's entry into World War II. They then point to Billy Wilder's *A Foreign Affair* (1948) to show the rapid postwar emergence of more jaundiced views of Iowans and their patriotism. Although an extensive treatment of all 410 films would exceed the scope of any book, more analytical summaries would have been helpful and feasible. For example, in their summary of Gus Van Sant's *Promised Land* (2012), the authors refer to a review by Richard Corliss arguing that the film is a retelling of *The Music Man* with fracking rights taking the place of musical instruments. A more consistent eye for this kind of connectivity and subtle remaking would animate and strengthen the assertion that Iowa films have a tradition and that the twenty-first century brought new approaches and new themes.

AS KNEPPER AND LAWRENCE were finishing their book, an exhibit titled *Hollywood in the Heartland* opened at the State Historical Museum of Iowa in Des Moines. (Knepper served as a consulting scholar.) The authors consider this exhibit "a visual complement" to *The Book of Iowa Films* (x). The exhibit's scope, though, is in some ways more ambitious. Like a multiplex in a mall, *Hollywood in the Heartland* shows something for everyone.

The exhibit contextualizes the films set in Iowa with a history of the technology, business, and culture of film viewing as well as display cases dedicated to actors from Iowa, starting with twentieth-century stars such as Indianola's Lane Sisters, Lillian Russell, Donna Reed, and John Wayne, and enticing younger visitors with twenty-first-century sensations such as Michelle Monaghan and Ashton Kutcher.

Beginning with the kinoscope, a machine designed to play a short film for one viewer, the exhibit charts the development of the shared experience offered by movie theaters in Iowa's larger cities and small towns. These theaters, like the movie studios that supplied them with films, were created as businesses. Opera houses in Dubuque and Davenport, for example, became "movie palaces" when it was clear that lots of tickets would be sold; purpose-built cinemas came later, and many small towns had one. The exhibit features old-fashioned movie theater seats to relax in and view the film clips on display, evoking dark, velvety nights out in front of the big screen. Vintage film projectors, ticket machines, and popcorn poppers reinforce the historicity. Similarly, clips play on the windshield of a big-finned car to mimic summer nights at the drive-in. Robert Fridley, founder and president of the Fridley Theatre Corporation, the largest Iowa-owned theater chain, gets his turn on the screen, talking animatedly about his 60 years of experience in the industry. Our shrunken, solitary twenty-first-century screens may change our shared understandings of film-mediated Iowa, although neither the book nor the exhibit attempt to speculate on the future of movie-going.

*Hollywood in the Heartland* implicitly makes an argument that *The Book of Iowa Films*, with its equalizing emphasis on cataloguing, does not make: judging from the space devoted to them, the most significant films about Iowa are *Field of Dreams* (1989), *The Bridges of Madison County* (1995), *The Music Man* (1962), and two versions of *State Fair*, the 1933 original and the 1945 musical version with songs by Rodgers and Hammerstein. In the authoritative talking head style of a documentary, Knepper provides lucid and insightful commentary on each of those films.

All of them convey the theme of "Iowa as a Magical Place." *Field of Dreams*, with its flattering Q&A dialogue—"Is this heaven?" "No, it's Iowa"—exemplifies this theme most strongly,

but River City works its magic on Harold Hill, helping the “music man” become what he first pretended to be: a man concerned with the greater good of the community. Whenever the “76 Trombones” clip cycles through *The Music Man* display, this victory march for “Iowa nice” drowns out all other audio in the exhibit. In *The Bridges of Madison County*, farm wife Francesca, an Italian sophisticate turned war bride, and the globe-trotting photographer Robert Kincaid kindle and renounce their love in support of the principles of Madison County—the family and the farm—but not before experiencing a few transformative days of rural romance. The *State Fair* films’ focus on the Frake family, with a son and daughter at the point of choosing their future, allows for more perspectives. (Father Frake’s exuberant pride in the hog he intends to show at the Iowa State Fair also permits a little snickering at stereotypical rubes.) After meeting potential mates at the state fair, the son chooses to stay down on the farm rather than follow the Chicago chanteuse who charms him on the midway while the daughter goes to Chicago to marry the journalist she met. The musical version turns Iowa into a portable feast. “All I Owe Ioway” celebrates the nourishing food that makes us who we are—not only physically healthy but also morally sound, upright members of society whether we stay in Iowa or carry a bit of it with us.

The exhibit also devotes significant attention to *Cold Turkey* (1971). Like *The Wonderful Thing* (1921), the first film made in Iowa, *Cold Turkey* generated lots of excitement because of the contact with Hollywood stars: Norma Talmadge in Centerville in 1921, and Dick Van Dyke in Greenfield in 1971. Although *Cold Turkey*, a film satirizing heartland morality in “Eagle Rock, Iowa,” enjoyed little critical or box office success, Greenfield enjoyed the experience so much that the town invited the cast and crew back for a 30-year reunion that generated another movie—an Iowa Public Television documentary about it in 2000.

*FIELD OF DREAMS* and *The Bridges of Madison County* were made nearly 20 years ago; no subsequent Iowa-related film has matched their box office success. The means-of-production narrative that parallels the film history suggests that these two may have been the last Iowa blockbusters. Media is no longer mass,

this story goes. Digital cameras have made filmmaking far less expensive, so myriad independent films, available for streaming or showing at the film festival nearest you, now explore what it means to be made in Iowa or how Iowa and Iowans are no different from anybody else. *The Book of Iowa Films* quantifies this development clearly: “the pace of Iowa film production has increased dramatically. From 1918 through 2000, our filmography lists 251 Iowa films; in the twelve years from 2001 through 2013, 159 films appeared” (17). Without advertising campaigns or trailers to preview the coming attractions and entice a large audience, these films reach the buffs who seek them out. At the same time, it could be argued that these films are the most intensely Iowan of all those described in *The Book of Iowa Films*. They are written by Iowa screenwriters (rather than adapted from previously published novels, plays, or short stories) and performed, directed, and produced by Iowans in every corner of the state.

## Book Reviews and Notices

*The Once and Future Great Lakes Country: An Ecological History*, by John L. Riley. Rural, Wildland, and Resource Studies Series. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press. 2013. xxiv, 488 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, index. \$39.95 hardcover; \$29.95 paperback.

Reviewer Kevin C. Brown is a postdoctoral researcher for the American Society for Environmental History. His research and writing have focused on the environment of the cutover lands of Minnesota and Louisiana from the 1870s to the 1930s.

In *The Once and Future Great Lakes Country*, John L. Riley — a senior scientist at the Nature Conservancy of Canada — has assembled a rich and detailed account of the evolving interaction between the human residents and the environment in the Great Lakes region of Canada and the United States from the end of the last ice age to the present. Throughout, he argues that at the hands of human manipulations and the Holocene warming, change has been the only constant for the region's ecology. In fact, "Nature," Riley reminds us, "never repeats itself" (xxiv).

*The Once and Future Great Lakes Country* extensively documents the declines in the region's ecological health since the arrival of Europeans in North America, but through a careful reading of a range of records produced by colonists, Riley tackles this story with nuance and still conveys the great weight of violence, dispossession, and profit seeking that compelled the degradation of the region's forests, wildlife, and prairies.

He begins by showing how residents of the Great Lakes region altered its ecology long before the arrival of Europeans. A diverse set of Native American societies regularly burned woodlands and prairies to increase their productivity for hunting, gathering, and agriculture, for example. Early European explorers' descriptions of the region's flora and fauna did not reflect a people-less "wilderness," but a land long tended to by Native Americans' stewardship. (The argument here will be familiar to fans of William Cronon's 1983 classic, *Changes in the Land*.)

Two portions of Riley's study show the potential for the land to "recover" from the more destructive human manipulations that followed. He documents a substantial "ecological wilding" (83) across the Great Lakes region during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in the interim between the decimation of Native societies (which drastically reduced their ability to manage the landscape) and widespread settlement by Europeans. That this recovery happened as the result of

a profound and brutal demographic transition, however, suggests its limited usefulness for present conservation concerns.

More relevant for the twenty-first century is Riley's optimism about a more recent process of "restoration" (340) in the region's ecology over the past 50 years. Armed with new laws and land management practices, governments around the Great Lakes country have made important gains in recovering some of the health of the woods, prairies, and skies, Riley writes. He argues, however, that this recovery will not turn back the clock to an earlier Great Lakes ecology. Instead, urban-dominated land use planning and the burden of anthropogenic climate change will result in a "new" nature in the region, not the replication of a preindustrial one.

Despite these important insights, *The Once and Future Great Lakes Country* is a frustrating book. One of the great challenges of regional history lies in explaining to readers why the area under examination should be tackled *as a region*. In his introduction, Riley briefly takes up this definitional problem, explaining that the Great Lakes country is *le pays d'en haut* ("the upper country") of New France, but he does not tell readers why taking the seventeenth-century French empire's extent is a solid foundation for this longer history (xxii). As Riley himself demonstrates, ecologically the territory surrounding the Great Lakes is quite diverse, and residents have not always seen (and may not now see) themselves as part of something called "the Great Lakes country." Riley compounds this confusion by prioritizing the experience of southern Ontario over other portions of the region throughout the text. It remains unclear whether this choice reflects the "center of gravity" for the region or simply what Riley feels most comfortable writing about.

The study could have also benefited from tighter editing. In many places its detail and repetition overwhelm the arguments. And although it contains beautifully reproduced color maps, graphs, paintings, and photographs on various aspects of Great Lakes history and ecology, they are poorly integrated into the book's argument. (Figure 24, as just one of several possible examples, explains that a series of color-coded bands stretched across a map of the region illustrates "vegetation hardness zones," but offers in support only a baffling map key and no source for the image.)

One of the central contributions of environmental history to the historical enterprise *writ large* is its ability to show how nature influences and is influenced by human societies across conventional political or cultural boundaries. Despite its problems, Riley's "ecological history" certainly conveys this relationship. It will be useful for teachers of the region's history looking to bring the environment into their classrooms.

*American Indians in U.S. History*, by Roger L. Nichols. The Civilization of the American Indian Series, vol. 248. Second edition. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014. xxiv, 191 pp. Illustrations, maps, chronology, suggested readings, index. \$24.95 paperback.

Reviewer Donald L. Parman is retired from Purdue University. He is the author of *Indians and the American West in the Twentieth Century* (1994).

This book, concisely covering the history of American Indians from pre-history to the present, was first published in 2003. (I reviewed it in the Spring 2004 issue of this journal.) For this second edition, the author has retained the earlier chapter structure while promising to put greater stress on Indians' social and cultural issues and to correct factual errors and omissions. One new feature of the second edition is the addition of six biographical sketches of notable Indians: Molly Brant, Sequoyah (George, Giss, or Guess), Sara Winnemucca, Carlos Montezuma (Wacaja), Alice Lee Jamison, and Ada Deere.

Comparing the texts of the two editions reveals mostly minor changes, such as different word choices and occasionally adding new sentences. In dealing with the Spanish in Florida, Nichols wrote a paragraph covering events after the De Soto expedition. He made numerous changes in the chapter covering the period from 1970 to the present, discussing several topics that have been resolved since 2003 and summarizing new issues that have arisen in more recent times.

What has not changed in the new edition is the author's goal of writing for nonspecialists. He does not provide footnotes or a bibliography but does offer a list of suggested readings at the end of each chapter. The book remains an excellent introduction to Indian history.

*Creating the American West: Boundaries and Borderlands*, by Derek R. Everett. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014. xvi, 302 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, appendix, bibliography, index. \$29.95 hardcover.

Reviewer William E. Lass is professor emeritus of history at Minnesota State University, Mankato. He is the author of *Shaping the North Star State: A History of Minnesota's Boundaries* (2014).

Anyone seeing only the title of this book could easily make some mistaken assumptions about its nature. "American West" can and does mean different things to different people. The West considered by Everett is the trans-Mississippi West, so for the purposes of this study Iowans are westerners. Furthermore, many would-be readers might assume that the book deals with all state boundaries in the region west of the Mississippi River. Instead, Everett devotes six of his eight chapters to specific boundaries — western Arkansas, Missouri-Iowa, Oregon-

Washington, California-Nevada, New Mexico-Colorado, and North Dakota-South Dakota. These were apparently selected for detailed treatment because they were either controversial or unique in some way.

In aptly noting the significance of state boundaries, Everett observes that "the creation and evolution of western state boundaries represented the single most important method of transforming a naturally anonymous landscape into a functional part of the United States" (4). In other words, state boundaries define a legal entity that is part of the federal union and clearly distinct from adjoining states. Iowa and Missouri neighbors who live across a road from each other obviously have similar cultures and share a climate. But one has to look to Des Moines and the other to Jefferson City to determine such things as how fast they can drive and taxation, inheritance, and marriage laws.

Everett concludes that state-making in the trans-Mississippi West was influenced by precedents from America's colonial and early national periods. The boundaries of the 13 colonies were a combination of natural (which Everett calls geographical) and artificial (latitudinal and longitudinal lines or geometric to Everett). The Ordinance of 1785, which provided for a land survey system with square townships and square sections helped solidify the notion that boxlike-shaped states were the most logical legal entities. Everett notes that geometric boundaries were ultimately the usual practice in the trans-Mississippi West. This sometimes resulted in the division of very homogeneous peoples, such as in the case of Colorado and New Mexico.

As an alternative to straight-line boundaries, Everett mentions the advocacy of the American explorer John Wesley Powell for each state to be limited by its natural drainage areas. While artificial boundaries have created some problems, it is difficult to imagine that Powell's scenario would have been an improvement. In the nineteenth century, when most of the western states were formed, their creators could not comprehend the future impact of such forces as rapid population growth, industrialization, and urbanization.

The final shaping of a state was determined in part by the preference of its residents, but Congress had the ultimate authority. Usually a territory aspiring to statehood was already partially limited by the earlier admission of adjoining states. Iowa Territory from its 1838 founding was bounded on the east by the Mississippi River and on the south by the state of Missouri.

But during its territorial period (1838–1846) Iowa became embroiled in a vitriolic border war with its southern neighbor. The contention was sparked by Missouri's decision to claim and survey a northern boundary about ten miles north of its original one. That shift was justified

on the grounds that such a line would conform to its statehood act provision that the northern boundary had to be on the latitude of the Des Moines River rapids. Iowa Territory officials charged that there were no rapids in the Des Moines River and Missouri was only promoting an illegal land grab. Contention peaked in 1839. An acerbic war of words between Missouri Governor Lilburn W. Boggs and Iowa Territorial Governor Robert Lucas led to the activation of rival militias. Despite their bombast, the governors and their supporters realized that the dispute could only be resolved by the U.S. Supreme Court—the final arbiter of interstate boundaries. Finally in 1849 the court ruled that the Iowa-Missouri boundary had to be the one that existed before Missouri attempted to adjust its northern boundary.

The Iowa-Missouri boundary dispute has been covered previously to varying degrees in Iowa's histories. Nonetheless, it is certainly worth retelling, and Everett's well-documented and entertaining description should be of great interest to anyone concerned with Iowa's history. [See also Everett's article on this topic in the Fall 2008 issue of this journal. — Ed.]

I highly recommend this excellent book to anyone specifically interested in the development of Iowa's southern boundary as well as those who are curious about the political evolution of the trans-Mississippi West.

*Shaping the North Star State: A History of Minnesota's Boundaries*, by William E. Lass. Saint Cloud, MN: North Star Press of Saint Cloud, 2014. x, 230 pp. Maps, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$16.95 paperback.

Reviewer Derek R. Everett is adjunct professor of history at Metropolitan State University of Denver. He is the author of *Creating the American West: Boundaries and Borderlands* (2014).

In this comprehensive and enthusiastic explanation of how the Land of Ten Thousand Lakes came to be, the dean of Minnesota history turns his attention to the invisible bounds of the North Star State. William E. Lass incorporates vital events and issues of local, regional, national, and even international importance to create a thorough and well-contextualized story, illustrating well the complicated process by which Minnesota took shape.

Drawing on a blend of his previous scholarship as well as new research, Lass leaves no stone unturned in his quest to depict the physical creation of Minnesota. He organizes the work chronologically as well as geographically, focusing on each of Minnesota's boundaries as it emerged through factors both near and far from the future state. First,

he draws on and elaborates some of his earlier work on the international border between the United States and British Canada, the first line to appear that eventually served to embrace the state. He draws in events of broad significance, ranging from the 1783 Treaty of Paris through the 1842 Webster-Ashburton Treaty to show the global implications of the line that emerged. From there, Lass shifts to internal American disputes over land organization, starting with Iowa's statehood and its shared boundary with Minnesota. The third chapter explores how the Northwest Territory's legacy affected the barrier with Wisconsin, and the fourth traces a decade of Minnesota territorial history as newcomers debated how to orient their prospective polity. Lass's final two chapters explain the surveying, marking, and enforcing of Minnesota's boundaries as well as the controversies and consequences that extended far beyond the mid-nineteenth century.

For aficionados of Iowa, the second chapter of *Shaping the North Star State* offers unique and compelling insights into Hawkeye history. The history of the southern boundary with Missouri, in particular the bloodless "Honey War" of 1839, has demanded more attention than the other four. Lass turns the focus northward to the generally overlooked limit with Minnesota, but in doing so he tells a great deal of Iowa history as well. To understand the existence of the northern Iowa line, Lass leads readers through an overview of territorial history and debates within Iowa over its future. Familiar names appear—including Robert Lucas, John Chambers, and Augustus Dodge—as Lass follows political disputes in Iowa and Washington, D.C., that crafted Iowa's limits. In the process, Lass incorporates the emerging geographical knowledge of the western United States, the work of mapmaker Joseph Nicollet in particular, to show how cartography affected visions of the region, such as whether geographic features or geometric lines should play the greatest role. The chapter concludes with a discussion of surveying and marking the line six years after Iowa achieved statehood with its geometric northern division.

As Lass does in each chapter, he brings readers into the Iowa-Minnesota debates intimately, giving the sense of sitting in the corner listening to impassioned oratory of the nineteenth century rather than reading a dusty account. In doing so, Lass emphasizes the legacy of each line and boundary making in general, recognizing the complications inherent in the process and the lasting consequences of political organization. His book offers a vital and valuable contribution to Minnesota and regional history, as well as an example of how to incorporate factors from local to global in telling a rich tale of special places on the map.

*American Crucifixion: The Murder of Joseph Smith and the Fate of the Mormon Church*, by Alex Beam. New York: Public Affairs, 2014. xv, 334 pp. Illustrations, map, cast of characters, chronology, notes, glossary, bibliography, index. \$26.99 hardcover.

Reviewer Todd M. Kerstetter is associate professor of history at Texas Christian University. He is the author of *God's Country, Uncle Sam's Land: Faith and Conflict in the American West* (2005).

In *American Crucifixion* Alex Beam provocatively depicts the 1844 murder of Joseph Smith in western Illinois as a crucifixion. Beam, a gifted writer with an eye for great stories, makes his case through an intimate discussion of Mormon history and the social and political development of frontier Illinois. He mined appropriate archives at Yale University and in Utah, Illinois, and elsewhere; read widely in up-to-date secondary literature; and consulted an array of experts on Mormon history in preparing this solidly researched work. Almost all of the action unfolds in Illinois from the arrival of Mormon settlers in 1838 through Smith's death in 1844. Missouri, from which the Mormons were expelled, has a minor but critical role. Iowa makes a cameo appearance.

This journal's readers will find much to appreciate in Beam's book. Mormons and Mormonism migrated from upstate New York to Ohio to Missouri to Illinois and then through Iowa and Nebraska to Utah, among other places. During the Illinois period, the Mormons established a theocratic city-state at Nauvoo, on the bank of the Mississippi River across from Iowa, built their second temple, and made quantum leaps in developing ritual and doctrine, perhaps most notably significant developments in plural marriage. Most important, Smith's murder deprived the Mormon community of its founding prophet, leader, and first candidate for president of the United States. In the aftermath, Brigham Young emerged as Smith's successor and took the main body of Mormons out of Illinois, across Iowa, and on to Utah in a migration that has been likened to the biblical Exodus. At another level, the book's discussion of Nauvoo and surrounding non-Mormon communities provides great insight into the development of social order and justice on what was at the time the frontier of U.S. expansion.

Beam thoroughly explores events of 1838 through 1844, years that saw the Mormons flee Missouri and develop Nauvoo. He wisely begins the book with helpful tools for newcomers to the topic: a cast of characters, a list of place names, and a map. Eleven of the book's 14 chapters deal with the five-year period leading up to Smith's murder. Events turn quickly as the Mormons transform from a welcomed force for settlement and development to a detested community. As Nauvoo boomed from a sleepy river village to a city of 10,000 that threatened to

rival Chicago, non-Mormons in the area began to resent their new neighbors' influence and unusual habits. By chapter four, "Everybody Hates the Mormons," the seeds of conflict have sprouted. Chapter six, "The Perversion of Sacred Things," reveals the deep discord that affected life in and around Nauvoo. Conflict over plural marriage pitted Mormons against Mormons as well as non-Mormons. Smith's destruction of an opposition newspaper put him at odds with the nation's fundamental belief in the freedom of the press and might have done as much as anything to precipitate his demise. As tensions rose, Smith declared martial law in Nauvoo, which ultimately yielded a charge of treason that landed him in jail in Carthage, the county seat. A vigilante mob stormed the prison and killed Smith and his brother Hyrum, a potential successor. In Beam's telling, Smith foresaw his demise and viewed his opponents as wishing to crucify him. He casts Thomas Ford, governor of Illinois, as Pontius Pilate, the secular figure unwilling to stop a vigilante "crucifixion," carried out in this case by firearms. Two chapters discuss how the Mormons responded to the murders and their aftermath. Beam helps his readers by providing a summary of Mormon history and theology early in the book.

Beam, a journalist and writer who has published two novels and several works of nonfiction, tells the story in lively, engaging prose that should appeal to both general and academic audiences. He presents an admirably balanced treatment of conflicts in which each side has been vilified. Mormon scholars likely will not find much new here. Readers interested in antebellum midwestern history might, especially if they have not paid much attention to Mormon history. Labeling Joseph Smith's death a "crucifixion" bends the word's meaning and stands to generate controversy by likening Smith to Jesus Christ. Whatever shortcomings might attach to Beam's usage, it fits on enough levels to inspire thoughtful reconsideration of how religion, society, and government intersected on the Illinois frontier in the 1840s.

*From Vicksburg to Cedar Creek: The 22nd Iowa Infantry in the Civil War*, by Thomas P. McKenna. Iowa City: Camp Pope Publishing, 2014. 220 pp. Illustrations, maps, glossary, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$28.95 hardcover, \$18.95 paperback.

Reviewer Kenneth L. Lyftogt is a lecturer in history at the University of Northern Iowa. He is the author of several books on Iowa and the Civil War, including *Iowa's Forgotten General: Matthew Mark Trumbull and the Civil War* (2005).

Few Civil War regiments have a story to compare with that of the 22nd Iowa Infantry, which served in both the Western and Eastern theaters of the war, with a battle record as gallant and as tragic as any. The 22nd

Iowa also gave the state its second Civil War governor, William M. Stone of Knoxville.

Thomas P. McKenna's book is presented on its back cover as "the first comprehensive history of the 22nd Iowa Volunteer Infantry to be published in over 100 years." Although the book is, indeed, the first book on the regiment in over 100 years, it is by no means comprehensive. It is a book about the Civil War that merely uses the 22nd Iowa as a kind of thread to stitch the account together.

McKenna is solid in following the regiment through its remarkable service in brigades, divisions, corps, and armies. That aside, he fills the book with an almost redundant plethora of facts about the war, as if to make the book his own version of *The Life of Billy Yank*. As a result, he loses sight of his purpose, and the reader is forced to extract the story from page after page with scarcely a mention of the 22nd Iowa.

A Civil War regiment was a dynamic fusion of personalities and politics. Each company in a regiment was made up of hometown friends and neighbors. Who were the soldiers in the ranks of the 22nd Iowa? How and where were they recruited? The 24th Iowa was the "Temperance Regiment," the 40th Iowa was the "Copperhead Regiment." Did the 22nd Iowa have a unique designation? Each regimental officer was a hometown leader with political connections and aspirations for promotion and glory. William Milo Stone commanded the regiment; Harvey Graham was second in command. Who were these officers? Where were they from? Did they have jobs and families? How did they achieve their rank? Were they competitive rivals, or did they respect and cooperate with each other? What were their politics? How did political influence contribute to their service? Iowa had many heroic officers, but William Stone went directly from the Vicksburg battles to the Republican nomination for governor. How did that happen? McKenna gives readers very little on any of this.

The book begins with a preface that contains advice on the use of historical evidence that should be required reading for every history major. The maps are very good, as are the photos. With the glaring exception of the lack of any reference to Iowa's *Roster and Record*, the bibliography is fine. There are quotations from primary sources that do much for the book. Anyone interested in the 22nd Iowa Infantry will want this book, but only as one among other sources. A reader looking for a "comprehensive history" will still have to wait.

*Yankee Dutchmen under Fire: Civil War Letters from the 82nd Illinois Infantry*, translated and edited by Joseph R. Reinhart. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2013. 272 pp. Maps, illustrations, notes, bibliographic essay, bibliography, index. \$45.00 hardcover.

Reviewer Paul Fessler is professor of history and chair of the department at Dordt College. In addition to writing on immigration and military history, he is the editor of *Dutch Immigrants on the Plains* (2006).

An impressive combination of a letter collection and a regimental history, *Yankee Dutchmen under Fire* provides an engrossing glimpse into the lives and experiences of midwestern German immigrants during the Civil War. About half of the letters included in the volume are “public” letters from members of the regiment that were published in various German-language newspapers in Illinois and Missouri that highlight the positive and downplay (or ignore) the negative aspects within the regiment. The vast majority of the remaining letters are from First Lt. Rudolph Müller to the unit’s founder, Col. Friedrich Hecker, who resigned from the army in early 1864. Müller’s letters accentuate the politics, intrigue, and feuds within the German American regiment, which became part of the German American-dominated XI Corps of the Army of the Potomac that quickly broke in a surprise attack by Stonewall Jackson at Chancellorsville in early 1863, tainting the reputation of German American soldiers in the Union Army ever since. This letter collection follows these soldiers through the rest of the war in Chattanooga and Atlanta and as part of Sherman’s March to the Sea.

Anyone interested in the lives and perspectives of German Iowans who served in the Union Army during the Civil War will find that this volume provides insight into similar midwestern German Americans across the border in Illinois. In the public letters to German-language newspapers, the letter writers convey the discrimination (and misunderstanding) inflicted by English-speaking officers. That said, it is clear that these Germans believed themselves superior in education and military prowess to English-speaking soldiers. Even more interesting is the intraethnic conflict evident even within the public letters. For example, Lt. Müller displays anti-Semitic language to describe German Jewish officer Edward Salomon, who replaced Col. Hecker in 1863. The newspapers and the letter writers come primarily from the liberal wing of the German American community, whose leaders had fled Germany after the failed 1848 liberal revolutions. Col. Hecker was one of the most famous “Forty-Eighters” who supported the Radical Republican agenda that included abolition of slavery. To help readers make sense of this diversity, Reinhart provides an extensive bibliographic essay on German American soldiers in Illinois and the Midwest. He also contextualizes

each letter with extensive footnotes that provide even more clarity regarding the individuals and events mentioned. Reinhart's expertly woven combination of primary and secondary sources makes this a highly recommended volume for anyone interested in the Civil War or German American immigrants in the Midwest.

*With Malice toward Some: Treason and Loyalty in the Civil War Era*, by William A. Blair. The Littlefield History of the Civil War Era. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014. 432 pp. Appendixes, graphs, notes, bibliography, index. \$40.00 hardcover.

Reviewer Victoria Bryant Stewart is a Ph.D. history student at Northern Illinois University and adjunct history professor at the College of DuPage.

The American Civil War fostered a sense of anxiety in the North that resulted in a desire to locate, detect, and eliminate treasonous activity. William Blair's monograph outlines the evolution of treason law and its prosecution. He explains that treason is the only crime specifically addressed in the U.S. Constitution. Despite that presence in America's foundational document, treason is difficult to prosecute.

Blair opens his discussion by addressing the treatment of treason under British rule, when treason was treated as a political and individual crime. In the United States, treason was seen as the attempt to levy war against the government of the United States or to provide aid to its enemies.

Blair focuses on the social and political ramifications of treason rather than on constitutional theory. He skillfully describes the understanding and interpretations of treason for President Abraham Lincoln's administration, the courts, and civilians and explains how the military was used to define treason and capture treasonous individuals. According to Blair, the military served as an "instigator" of the Lincoln administration's civil liberty policies. The Union's efforts, in Confederate regions and areas sympathetic to the Southern cause, consisted of maintaining loyalty as "a struggle over the security of households." Blair addresses the postwar treatment of Confederate officers and soldiers, who were granted clemency once their loyalty was certified.

For those interested in local and Iowa history, Blair addresses significant events and themes. Iowans responded enthusiastically to calls for troops, and Iowa had an extensive support network on the home front that secured supplies, operated farms in soldiers' absences, and treated sick and wounded soldiers. Blair recounts a particular event in February 1863 in Keokuk, Iowa, when approximately 75 wounded soldiers banded together to focus their displeasure on the *Keokuk Daily*

*Constitution*. Upset with the newspaper's disloyal articles, they entered the office and destroyed the printing presses. The soldiers were eventually disbanded, but their actions show local efforts to punish and prevent disloyalty. Blair notes the significance of destroying printing presses to curb treason since such actions show public concern for the contents of printed materials.

Blair addresses Copperhead actions throughout the Union that were perceived as disloyal and dangerous to the U.S. government and those based on the home front. He notes the treatment of Copperheads and the responses to their actions. Iowa's history contains instances of Copperhead activity that directly confronted the authority of provost marshals. In one instance, such activity resulted in the deaths of Deputy Provost Marshal John Bashore and Special Agent Josiah Woodruff, who were murdered when attempting to arrest three draft evaders. Blair skillfully describes the duties and responsibilities of provost marshals, explaining the dangers provost marshals faced when performing their duties. These dangers included the enforcement of policies, but also rested in their duties to police and prevent treason.

Blair has constructed an impressive body of scholarship regarding the treatment and perceptions of treason among different sectors of society. He shows how civilians responded more quickly than the federal government, causing a reevaluation of legal standards regarding treason and other dangerous activities that threaten the state. Northerners, fearful of treason in their communities and displeased by the federal government's assessment and punishment of treason, showed their disapproval of disloyal activities. They sought, for example, to limit the printing of newspaper articles with questionable contents and, after the war, to prevent former Confederates from voting. Blair skillfully demonstrates how ex-Confederates were required to accept the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments.

The strength of this work lies in the extensiveness of the research. Government documents, court cases, and period periodicals recount instances of treason but also expose how events were connected throughout the nation. Extensive appendixes list political arrests and those court-martialed for treason or disloyalty. Blair's work is a welcome addition to Civil War scholarship, an excellent resource for those interested in the treatment of treason and Northern perceptions of disloyalty.

*The Long Shadow of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address*, by Jared Peatman. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2013. xvii, 244. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.50 hardcover and e-book.

Reviewer Stacy Pratt McDermott is assistant director/associate editor of the Papers of Abraham Lincoln. She is the author of *Mary Lincoln: Southern Girl, Northern Woman* (2015).

Every year, countless books and articles are published on Abraham Lincoln and various aspects of his life, his presidency, and his legacy. In my capacity as an editor of the Papers of Abraham Lincoln, I try to take full stock of major publications and make an effort to stay abreast of new scholarship that makes a significant impact. Yet it is virtually impossible to wade through all of the new material and, quite honestly, much of the new material is not worth the trouble. Therefore, when I come across a book like Jared Peatman's *The Long Shadow of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address*, I am particularly delighted.

Peatman's book offers a refreshing view of the historical trajectory of the Gettysburg Address from a quiet, short speech at a cemetery dedication into a quintessential document of American identity. Arguing that the speech did not become a revered historical document for Americans until after World War II, Peatman rejects Gary Wills's interpretation that Lincoln's speech remade America in the 1860s, and he tempers Gabor Borritt's assertion that the document became important in America following the end of Reconstruction. Instead, he argues persuasively that it was not until after World War II and the centennial of the Civil War that the Gettysburg Address provided inspiration for Americans and for people throughout the world. Only then did Lincoln's speech become revered for the controversial ideals within it. Only then did it become synonymous with American democracy. Peatman agrees with Borritt that the speech became *the* Gettysburg Address by the closing decade of the nineteenth century, but he argues that this emphasis says much more about the waning significance of the keynote address of Edward Everett, the famed orator who delivered the two-hour sermon prior to Lincoln's two-minute address, than to a rising interest in Lincoln's words. Peatman asserts that it took Americans 100 years to recognize the significance of the brief remarks that Lincoln uttered on November 19, 1863.

He bases much of his analysis on an interesting examination of immediate reactions to the Gettysburg Address in newspapers in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania; Richmond, Virginia; New York City; and London. He found that newspapers from each locale offered balanced reports of the speech, with slight variations in perspective, but there was no substantial evidence that observers of the events at Gettysburg interpreted Lincoln's short remarks there as historical.

The most lively and refreshing analysis comes in the final chapter, "The Very Core of America's Creed." There Peatman discusses how the United States deployed the Gettysburg Address and its deeper meanings

for democracy and equality for “propagandistic purposes” throughout the world after World War II. As America flexed its international muscle, ideals of democracy and equality became an international mantra of American identity, and Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address became a beautiful conveyor of that message. Peatman argues convincingly that it was in that specific context that the speech became a revered document not only for Americans but also for people throughout the world striving for freedom and democracy for themselves.

As Peatman concludes, “For a hundred years, the nation had lost Lincoln’s meaning at Gettysburg, for almost no one in the ensuing century discussed or acted on Lincoln’s demand that democracy must include equality” (191). But by January 19, 1963, at the centennial commemoration of Lincoln’s speech, the Gettysburg Address was as important to American identity as the U.S. Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. And it was *then* that the Gettysburg Address had the power to inspire the unprecedented equal rights legislation of the 1960s.

*Sod Busting: How Families Made Farms on the 19th-Century Plains*, by David B. Danbom. *How Things Worked*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014. x, 129 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliographical essay, index. \$44.95 hardcover, \$19.95 paper.

Reviewer Jeff Bremer is assistant professor of history at Iowa State University. He is the author of *A Store Almost in Sight: The Economic Transformation of Missouri from the Louisiana Purchase to the Civil War* (2014).

This concise book is a volume in Johns Hopkins University Press’s series *How Things Worked*. Written by historian David B. Danbom, author of the best one-volume history on rural America, *Sod Busting* is an excellent introduction to the challenges and opportunities of agricultural life in a difficult region for farming. Written for nonspecialists, it is an accessible and clear survey of the settlement of the Great Plains. Danbom breaks no new ground, using only published sources, but this is a rewarding story, focused on the struggles of individuals and families fighting to prosper in an unforgiving region.

The book focuses on four states – Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, and North Dakota – that have similar topography and climate. All were settled after the Civil War, and agriculture dominated their economies. In the 1860s and the 1870s Indian tribes were forced onto reservations, opening up the northern plains for settlement. Railroad construction and the Homestead Act helped to populate these territories and states.

The region was hard on American and European settlers. Winters were severe, wood was scarce, and water could be hard to find.

Danbom's story details the acquisition of land, the building of farms, and how families paid for their property, as well as the creation of communities and towns. Policies of the federal government were crucial to the settling of the northern plains, making land available for sale and encouraging economic development. While the Homestead Act did not account for more than 20 percent of land distributed in these four states, federal land policy and support for railroads helped bring settlers to the region.

There were many challenges to building farms. Weather on the northern plains could be treacherous, with blizzards, hailstorms, and tornadoes endangering humans, crops, and livestock. A lack of timber forced many families to build sod houses or dugouts. Insects and snakes found such housing hospitable. Hordes of grasshoppers threatened crops, and tough prairie grass made breaking land difficult. It took many years for new farms to become a success. Costs were high, and everyone in the family labored for years to build a home. A boom-and-bust cycle in the late nineteenth century only exacerbated these challenges.

The third chapter details the importance of credit for families on the plains. Most people needed \$500–\$800 to meet costs in their first year. Farmers needed short-term credit to pay for seed, animals, and emergency expenses. Family members, local banks, and general stores met this need. Long-term credit included mortgages on land, but such loans were different from today. Mortgages usually lasted less than ten years and required annual interest payments, with payment of the principal at the end of the loan.

The fourth chapter reviews how settlers built communities. Migrants brought institutions and values with them to the Great Plains from eastern states or Europe. Churches and schools operated as centers for local people. Shared labor, such as barn-raising or quilting parties, bonded neighbors. Towns provided commercial opportunities and often hosted fraternal organizations. Capitalism did not threaten communities, and people did not see themselves as competing with each other as much as battling railroads and banks, which seemed to exploit average folk.

Danbom's *Sod Busting* is an outstanding survey of farm making on the Great Plains. This elegantly written, well-researched volume will find an audience with students, historians, and general readers. Those with an interest in Iowa history will find much useful information here that helps to explain settlement in the western part of the state. Anyone teaching or studying the Great Plains will want to add this book to their library.

*Nameless Indignities: Unraveling the Mystery of One of Illinois's Most Infamous Crimes*, by Susan Elmore. True Crime History Series. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2013. xvii, 326 pp. Illustrations, maps, appendix, notes, index. \$34.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Jeffrey S. Adler is professor of history at the University of Florida. His most recent book is *First in Violence, Deepest in Dirt: Homicide in Chicago, 1875-1920* (2006).

In June 1882 an almost unspeakably brutal crime occurred in central Illinois's Christian County. Emma Bond, a young schoolteacher, was gang-raped and mutilated so sadistically that a newspaper termed her wounds "nameless indignities." In the aftermath of the crime, law enforcers charged six local men with the assault, a mob nearly lynched the suspects, and someone attempted to kidnap the victim. The ensuing trial exposed searing divisions in the community and shattered the lives of nearly everyone involved in the case. Genealogist Susan Elmore, a great-great niece of Emma Bond, reconstructs the crime, the trial, and the post-trial lives of the key figures. Because the jury acquitted the defendants, Elmore also attempts to solve this "spellbinding whodunit" (xii).

Elmore writes in the "true crime" genre. In the first two-thirds of the book, she provides a detailed description of the crime and the legal proceedings. Recounting those events, however, proved to be a challenge, for the trial transcript has not survived. But newspapers devoted copious attention to the case, and Elmore pieces together the story by drawing on dozens of newspaper accounts of the crime and the trial. Relying on her skills as a genealogist, she traces the victim, the accused, their relatives, and criminal-justice officials through census records and other sources. Although *Nameless Indignities* is lightly footnoted, Elmore's research is impressive. In the final third of the book, the author follows newly discovered clues to try to establish the identity of Emma Bond's attackers. Conveyed through a telephone conversation with an unidentified, elderly descendant of a resident, this information was largely unverifiable, though Elmore tries to determine "whodunit."

The author is at her best when reconstructing the trial. If the goal of a true crime book is to engage the reader with a riveting story, then Elmore has succeeded. If the goal is more ambitious, such as using a crime story to immerse readers in a different time and place, then *Nameless Indignities* is somewhat less successful. The final third of the book drifts away from Elmore's careful research and lapses into speculation, complete with fictionalized conversations, introduced with phrases such as "Hobbs might have said something like . . ." (253). Again and

again, Elmore uses this literary device as she attempts to solve the mystery, writing, for example, “a scenario that may have unfolded something like this . . .” (264). She acknowledges that the crucial new lead that undergirds the final section of the book is of questionable use: “Whether that [the recently revealed information] was true or the figment of an aging and clouded memory is hard to say” (278).

Finally, the author’s depiction of the historical context is a bit stylized. Elmore describes the local residents, for instance, as “all good Christians” and “friendly souls” (11). Yet some among these “good and trustworthy” people (13) committed a gang-rape, attempted to kidnap the victim and lynch the suspects, and levied threats against one another. Clearly social life in a small Illinois town in the 1880s was not entirely harmonious. In addition, Elmore might have consulted recent studies on sex crime, criminal justice, and journalism in the late nineteenth-century Midwest to place the trial more effectively in the legal context of the era. When the defendants were acquitted, for example, Elmore asserts that local residents were shocked. But observers of the trial certainly knew better, for prosecutors rarely won convictions in criminal cases during this period.

In short, the final section might have been better supported with evidence, and the description of the trial might have been better contextualized. Still, *Nameless Indignities* is a fascinating, thoroughly engaging book.

*The Quack’s Daughter: A True Story about the Private Life of a Victorian College Girl*, by Greta Nettleton. Revised edition. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2014. xxiv, 371 pp. Illustrations, notes, glossary, bibliography, name index. \$24.95 paperback.

Reviewer Jane Simonsen is associate professor of history and women’s & gender studies at Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois. She is the author of *Making Home Work: Domesticity and Native American Assimilation in the American West, 1860–1919* (2006).

Cora (Corize) Keck, daughter of Davenport’s famously unlicensed medical practitioner Mrs. Dr. Keck, was the “trophy daughter” whose acceptance at Vassar was a way of thumbing her nose at the mid-western elites who marginalized her family. Like other microhistories, Nettleton’s meticulous study of institutional records, Cora’s diary, and (most fascinatingly) her scrapbooks sets one life in the stream of other historical currents. It charts the social and work opportunities that education presented eager co-eds—and the gendered conventions that closed the door on them as resoundingly as they had on Cora’s mother.

Nettleton—Cora’s great-granddaughter—begins in Davenport, Iowa, where Keck’s widely successful alternative medical practice allowed her family to flaunt their wealth but subjected them to public humiliation through repeated court challenges. The Kecks took advantage of lax acceptance standards at the premier but financially strapped Vassar, sending Cora there to study piano. Cora, however, was more interested in studying her social opportunities: her scrapbooks were filled with studio photos of her with various galpals and “dudes” who trolled Poughkeepsie for outgoing rich girls. She cut classes, went to late-night soirées, and escaped to New York City with friends who gave her a taste of the life she craved. Hers is a story of intense yearning for social attention, musical mastery, and escape from her mother’s control and infamy. Nettleton ends the story back in the Midwest, where Cora’s wings are clipped and she resigns herself to rebellion via a profitable marriage to a much older man. Her college chums and crushes, meanwhile, suffer their own tragedies.

Nettleton’s personal investment in the story is both a draw and a distraction. She inserts details of her quest into the narrative; doing so gives readers a taste of the thrills and frustrations of the hunt while exposing key questions that historians ask. Yet mid-paragraph insertions such as “Here’s how I interpret the situation” (179) or asides on her personal distaste for banjo playing (337) can be unnecessary diversions. This history goes deep rather than broad, painstaking in detail but sometimes lacking easily researched contexts of women’s history. The rich section based on Cora’s diary sacrifices some narrative coherence in organizing the account strictly around the dates when events occur—characters and emotions come and go as in real life, but the reader needs to work hard to hold onto thematic threads. Likewise, because of sparse citation, it’s sometimes difficult to tell which episodes are directly derived from the evidence and which are pure invention. Because inferring is so central to the historian’s craft, it’s important to signal the difference.

Yet Nettleton’s creative and plausible inferences are what make the book so compelling to professional and lay historians alike. She constructs a gripping narrative from the tiniest of details: a page torn from and taped back into a scrapbook, a word boldly underlined, the positioning of one clipping next to another, the set of a chin in a photograph. She reconstructs whole months of Cora’s life by “reading” the story told by various objects—programs, hairpins, bits of tinsel—pasted into her scrapbook. Clippings, especially, reveal the absorbing backstory of Vassar alumnae’s increasing institutional power. In this way the book provides a guide for reading the sorts of texts so crucial to social, women’s,

local, and family history that should instruct any kind of student. While some passages are windy, even Nettleton's asides remind us of the reasons we love history: people in the past were more surprising than we imagine and anchor our present sense of self by tying us more firmly to those who came before.

*The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Construction of the Virginia Kendall Reserve, 1933–1939*, edited by Kenneth J. Bindas. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press. 146 pp. Map, illustrations, notes, index. \$19.95 paperback.

Reviewer Angela Sirna is a doctoral candidate in public history at Middle Tennessee State University. Her dissertation is "Recreating Appalachia: Cumberland Gap National Historical Park, 1922–1972."

Kenneth Bindas, professor and chair of the Department of History at Kent State University, assigned his students to study the New Deal history of a familiar landscape—Virginia Kendall Reserve (VKR) in Cuyahoga Valley National Park, located between Akron and Cleveland, Ohio. VKR was established in 1933 as a state park project for the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), a New Deal program that put unemployed young men to work on conservation projects. Bindas's students drew on government documents, oral histories, historical photographs, and other primary sources to examine the park's creation and the CCC experience. Bindas edited his students' best papers and presents them in this volume.

In August 1933 Harold Wagner, landscape architect and director of the Akron Metropolitan Park District, requested from the federal government a CCC camp to turn a 430-acre farm into a public park at VKR. Young CCC enrollees immediately set to work when the camp was organized a few months later. The CCC did more than create a park at VKR. It remade young men by inculcating "positive masculine values of work in a modern society" and giving them hope in the nation's future (63). Similarly, VKR planners used modern organizational and planning principles to remake nature as "modern, controlled, designed, and authentic," which Bindas and his students explored through VKR's landscape design (63). In both CCC camp life and VKR's design, they found a New Deal desire to use recreation as a form of learning to create better citizens. The CCC ended in 1942, but much of its work remains to be enjoyed by visitors today. VKR became a popular destination for Akron and Cleveland residents and was absorbed into the Cuyahoga Valley National Recreational Area in 1978.

Bindas did an excellent job leading his students through a process of shared inquiry and blending diverse voices into one cohesive narrative that sheds light on the important interconnection between social and land reform during the New Deal and places that connection squarely on the landscape. Bindas's class project is an admirable example of public history teaching and scholarship. However, the book is perhaps too laudatory of the CCC's accomplishments. The CCC program suffered some notable administrative problems, particularly a high rate of desertion. (See John Salamond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933–1942: A New Deal Case Study* [1967].) Probing such issues might have opened a poignant discussion.

This book is set in northeastern Ohio, but those interested in New Deal parks across the country will undoubtedly find it a useful starting point for interrogating such landscapes. In Iowa 46,000 CCC enrollees worked on projects in the state, and nearly 41 camps were organized for state park projects. (See Rebecca Conard, *Places of Quiet Beauty: Parks, Preserves, and Environmentalism* [1997]).

*Prairie Boys at War: Korea, volume 1, June–October 1950*, by M. M. Helm. Fargo, N.D.: Prairie Boy Books, 2014. v, 494 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, appendix, bibliography, index. \$22.00 paperback.

Reviewer Paul M. Edwards is Senior Fellow at the Center for the Study of the Korean War in Independence, Missouri. He compiled *The Korean War: An Annotated Bibliography* (1998).

The Korean War, long known as the “forgotten war,” might perhaps be better identified as the “ignored war.” It is not so much that Americans have forgotten this war as that they have never taken it seriously. Americans have never understood their nation's involvement nor appreciated the cost paid by its young men and women. One aspect of that has been a lack of recognition and respect for those who participated, as well as a lack of understanding of the vast national and international significance of the war itself. This volume makes an effort to correct some of these misunderstandings.

Shortly after the massive efforts of World War II, the United States, caught unprepared, opted to invest in the independence of the Republic of (South) Korea and called its young men and women back into service for a long and deadly war—a war that continues today, and one in which Americans are still involved. Merry Helm has undertaken a massive task with her decision to record the actions and citations of the men and women from the Prairie states who fought in the Korean War. This includes dozens of persons from Iowa. She provides a series of profiles

in which she considers the involvement, the actions, the heroics, and the often considerable sacrifice of those who fought. Her numerous stories cover all sorts of men and women, all ranks, all services, all circumstances, amazingly constructed to provide some insight into the individuals. This first volume (June–October 1950) covers the opening of the war, the massive retreat to the Pusan Perimeter, the breakout of the Eighth Army, and the invasion of Inchon. It concludes there, leaving the discussion of the Chinese invasion and the hill and outpost war for subsequent volumes.

While the scope of her work is limited to those from the Prairie states, the book is very informative about the early days of the Korean War, thus giving it an appeal to a far larger audience. More a creative historian than a military scholar, Helm provides some interpretations of action and behavior that are still open to question, as, for example, her identification of the flaws in MacArthur's entrapment plan (355). But these do not detract from her primary purpose. In the main the material is clearly and responsibly presented. The one drawback is a problem common to this type of work; that is, even though each individual and action is special and worthy of remembrance and appreciation, when combined together in this format the efforts presented often appear redundant. It is perhaps best read over an extended period of time.

The book is well written, even exciting at times, highly informative, and especially valuable if you or one of yours is mentioned. The author obviously cares that these stories are well told, and she has accomplished that. All in all, it is an honest and well-prepared honor to those who so deserve this recognition.

*Cold War Kids: Politics and Childhood in Postwar America, 1945–1960*, by Marilyn Irvin Holt. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2014. ix, 214 pp. Illustrations, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Jennifer Robin Terry is a doctoral candidate in history at the University of California, Berkeley. Her work looks at social and political intersections in American children's lives in the mid-twentieth century.

What do school lunch programs, the Indian Adoption Project, and eleven 1955 deaths from contaminated polio vaccines have in common? They all resulted, Marilyn Irvin Holt tells us in *Cold War Kids*, from an unprecedented uptick in federal intervention in American children's lives from 1945 to 1960. Holt explains that increased federal attention to childhood issues marks the period as a turning point in Americans' expectations and acceptance of federal responsibility and leadership in their everyday affairs. Although studies of children's history during the

Cold War period are often overshadowed by those on Progressive/New Deal federalism and Lyndon Johnson's 1960s Great Society, Holt argues that the immediate postwar period is worthy of deeper investigation as the era's political wrangling over such issues as juvenile delinquency, children's literacy, and popular entertainment demonstrates well the shifting state-to-federal balance of power.

Holt uses the 1950 and 1960 White House Conferences on Children and Youth both as a framework for the study and to demonstrate changes in the federal agenda. Prior to the 1950 conference, federal and state policies regarding childhood were narrow in scope and purpose. The four preceding White House conferences had been primarily concerned with poor and marginalized children—the delinquent, the destitute, and the orphaned—and resulted in few federal policy changes. The 1950 and 1960 conferences, on the other hand, strove to build a better citizenry and cope with Atomic Age fears by addressing issues that affected children across the board, regardless of socioeconomic, regional, or racial differences. Issues considered too costly or widespread became opportunities for federal intervention. That is not to say that federal expansion was unfettered or unchallenged. Holt acknowledges the transitional ebb and flow and points to resistance on various issues such as water fluoridation and school desegregation.

This book covers a lot of ground in four detailed chapters. The first chapter contextualizes the study through an examination of the 1950 and 1960 White House Conferences on Children and Youth. It touches on topics such as Cold War foreign and domestic concerns; the expansion of federal agencies; the increasing reliance on "experts"; and the growing recognition of adolescence as a special category of note. Subsequent chapters focus on three distinct areas most affected by expanded federal intervention: education, dependency (delinquents, orphans, and the impoverished), and children's health. Holt recognizes that many of these issues are longstanding and not unique to the Cold War period. What is different, she explains, is the Atomic Age rhetoric and Red Scare atmosphere that motivated policy changes that greatly affected children's lives. Illiteracy, poor health and fitness, and corrupt morals became potential threats to national security. Hence, she claims, federal policy had less to do with concern for children and more with building a bulwark against "the threat of Soviet superiority" (80). A minor criticism of this work is that the 1950 and 1960 White House Conferences on Children and Youth are conspicuously missing from chapter four. While the chapter's connection to the study's framework is implicitly obvious, lack of explicit mention (as in other chapters) leaves readers to assume connections.

Nonetheless, *Cold War Kids* is an important work that redirects East Coast biases of child welfare reform studies and demonstrates the national significance of concerns that arose in other regions. Coverage of issues significant to the Midwest, such as educational funding, segregation, and consolidation of rural schools, centers largely on Kansas. That is likely because a significant amount of Holt's research material came from the Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene, Kansas. She drew largely on official government documents, such as presidential commission reports, conference proceedings, and congressional statements. Specific examples from literature, film, television, and music enhance the argument. Of particular note is Holt's use of archival collections that have received scant attention until now, such as the records of the 1950 and 1960 White House Conferences on Children and Youth, housed in Abilene, Kansas; and the Orphan Correspondence Files at the National Archives and Record Administration in College Park, Maryland—a collection that Holt requested through the Freedom of Information Act.

Throughout the book, Holt successfully highlights the things that Americans said they wanted for their children—health, education, and hope in a world of insecurities—while specifying how Cold War tensions influenced government programs in form and function. Holt convincingly argues that childhood “achieved a new importance both culturally and politically” on the frontline of democracy in postwar America (150). *Cold War Kids* demonstrates in substantial ways that federal policies and agendas shaped postwar American childhood, leaving a legacy that continues into the twenty-first century.

*The Rural Midwest since World War II*, edited by J. L. Anderson. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University, 2014. xii, 323 pp. Illustrations, graphs, maps, tables, notes, index. \$28.95 paperback.

Reviewer Coreen Derifield is an instructor at East Central College in Union, Missouri. She is working on a book manuscript titled “Earning Her Daily Bread: Women and Industrial Manufacturing in the Rural Midwest, 1950–1980.”

*The Rural Midwest since World War II* provides an impressive array of essays on the state of the Midwest since 1945. Each contributor provides a descriptive answer to three questions that tend to arise when discussing the Midwest: What is the Midwest? What does it mean to be rural? And is the Midwest distinct? By tackling these difficult questions, the scholars provide a varied and complicated look at the social and economic diversity of the rural Midwest.

This collection also addresses two fundamental issues surrounding the history of the rural Midwest: the relative lack of scholarly interest in

the Midwest after World War II; and the problems surrounding the idea that the region is in decline. While the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are seen as the heyday of rural midwestern life, recent years have been characterized as a period of decline and decay. This volume counteracts that declension narrative by telling a story of a region reinventing itself through social and economic change. Each essay shows how people, economics, and ecology have adapted to a modern world of advanced technology. By addressing these concerns, the contributors provide an excellent survey of the current literature on the rural Midwest while also suggesting new areas for historical research and investigation.

The book's essays are divided into three major themes: changes in ecology and the landscape, economic and political development of industry and institutions, and social and cultural changes within families and communities. The first two essays by James Pritchard and Kendra Smith Howard address changes to the land itself and how new ecological practices have altered the landscapes of the rural Midwest. The second thematic collection addresses economic and political changes in the Midwest and how they affected rural areas in the region. Wilson Warren, Cornelia Butler Flora, and Jan Flora discuss the role of industrial development in rural areas of the region and how communities have embraced industry as a means of economic survival. J. L. Anderson focuses on how governmental farm policies affected farms and agricultural production. The largest collection of essays focuses on demographic and social change in rural areas in the region. Jenny Barker Devine demonstrates how rural women embraced new roles after advances in technology altered their previous home and domestic chores; and Pamela Riney-Kehrberg argues that because of changes in technology, entertainment, and education, childhood in the rural Midwest no longer retained its distinctive characteristics from the late nineteenth century. Debra Reid and Jim Norris discuss the place of minorities in the Midwest and show how African Americans have clung to their place in the countryside, despite their small numbers, while Latinos/Latinas are a growing demographic presence. Lastly, Steven Reschly demonstrates the surprising mobility of the Amish communities scattered throughout the Midwest and shows how they continually search for new opportunities and new places to practice their unique way of life focused on farming, family, community, and religion.

Each author argues against the myth of the Midwest as a bucolic wonderland of apple-cheeked children, contending that the reality of midwestern life is far more complex and diverse. David Danbom asserts in the final essay that "whatever made the place unique or special at one time . . . has been eroded by modern communications, population

movements, and a market economy; . . . what is most noteworthy about the region is its Americanness—its similarity to every other place” (297). The reality that Danbom presents is a Midwest that no longer represents the Jeffersonian ideal of the yeoman farmer, but includes economic and social diversity. Danbom contends that the reality of the non-distinct nature of the Midwest does not mean there is a lack of distinctive culture and community in rural areas of the region, but that there are many distinctive cultures that embody the midwestern ideal. These regional and community values passed down through generations of midwesterners are rooted in European ethnic identities, religion, and community history. Danbom claims that what makes the Midwest distinct is its essential Americanness, its commitment to hard work, self-sufficiency, family, and community. Whether these values and ideals represent the “real” Midwest is difficult to determine, but what is significant is the long-lasting commitment midwestern communities hold to those values. The people of the Midwest cling tenaciously to their way of life, embracing the ideal of midwestern niceness even though, in reality, the bucolic wholesomeness of the region may no longer exist.

The breadth of these essays provides a comprehensive overview of the region except for one problematic aspect of rural life: there is no sustained discussion of the rural poor. Several scholars across disciplines have attempted to address the issue of rural poverty, a growing concern in the rural Midwest because of the plethora of changes addressed in this book. Many areas across the region have become pockets of poverty as they have lost their livelihoods to the decline of agriculture, industry, or community businesses. While rural poverty is addressed indirectly, an essay dedicated to the difficulties of overcoming rural poverty and the ghettoization of these communities would be enlightening and informative.

Readers interested in Iowa history will find this book an important and engaging read as it places the state’s recent history in context with the rest of the region. The book identifies the causes of much of what has occurred in Iowa in recent history and explains the rapid agricultural, ecological, and demographic changes spreading across the state. Many of the essays specifically discuss communities in Iowa, and the state receives significant attention in all of the essays. Overall, the book provides an excellent overview of the rural Midwest since World War II and addresses the dearth of historical scholarship on the region in the recent past. It is an essential contribution to understanding the history of Iowa and the rural Midwest.

*Flyover Lives: A Memoir*, by Diane Johnson. New York: Viking, 2014. xviii, 263 pp. Illustrations. \$26.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Zachary Michael Jack is a seventh-generation Iowan, associate professor of English at North Central College, board member of the Midwestern History Association, and the author of *Iowa: The Definitive Collection*, among others.

I admire the craft of Diane Johnson's memoir, *Flyover Lives*, but I wouldn't recommend it to you, not if you much care about Midwest Present or Midwest Future. The author and the jet-setting lifestyle she spotlights here (she splits her time between San Francisco and Paris) represent an all-too-typical, and often painful, midwesterner trope—the best and brightest gone off to the world's many cosmopolitan Elsewheres, only to look back, if at all, in a memoir better suited to coastal sophisticates and ex-Iowans in Chicago and San Francisco and New York City than for the home folks.

Native Iowan Bill Bryson and native Illinoisan Diane Johnson have much in common; both have been happy not only to leave Iowa and the Midwest, but also to jettison America; both have made a handsome living critiquing their homeland well and widely; both return to our shores periodically to be reminded why they left, and of course to be inspired by the memory jog of provincial lives recalled and sometimes recoiled at. It might seem like I begrudge Bryson and Johnson their respective leavetakings. I don't. Bryson, unlike Johnson, is an amazing, sometimes transcendent storyteller whose jibes and digs against Des Moines he has lately tried to redress in warmed-over but not artless nostalgia of the kind served up in his memoir, *The Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid*. Johnson is an equally formidable, and by comparison, underrated literary talent; I found myself impressed by her laconically unerring prose.

*Flyover Lives*, though, is mostly a loosely strung together life story wholly lacking in the requisite narrative thru-line; at base it's a series of personal essays, many previously published in places like the *National Post* and the *New York Review of Books* belatedly (and badly) stitched together to make a book of the requisite heft. The writing here is at times masterful; it's worthwhile reading for anyone who admires the tradition of *belles lettres*. Still, only a writer of Johnson's advanced billing (the promotional materials are anxious to remind you, lest you've never heard of her, that she is both American-born and twice a nominee for the Pulitzer Prize) would merit such a scattershot and often self-indulgent biographical pastiche.

Johnson offers little for an Iowa reader in this slim memoir, though a few breadcrumbs are left us by dint of the author's Iowa-born father, who, as Johnson takes pains to mention, comes from the Hacklebarney

Region of the state, and via her mention of her Uncle Bill from Sioux City, whom Johnson ultimately commits to a madhouse. Those who grew up in the Quad Cities in the 1930s and 1940s may find the author's decorous, distanced, and elegiac rendering of her fortunate family's salad years on the Illinois side of the river of interest, though the closest her announced reading tour for the book came to Moline was Chicago. Though chapters on her post-Depression, prewar childhood in Moline and, to a lesser extent, Rock Island, are allotted roughly 30 of the first 50 pages, the balance of the book concerns the author's matrilineal line rooted in small-town Chenoa and Watseka, Illinois, and her later literary life spent in places like Los Angeles, New York, London, and Paris. It takes until the book's epilogue for the author to confess what a savvy reader suspected all along—that she spent more than 50 years away from Moline without coming back, only to return briefly for a high-school reunion as an inspiration for this epilogue-of-a-life-story. Iowa receives an even more distanced treatment, as our fly-by author mostly gazes at us from across the river.

Midwestern readers are likely to grapple with class resentments reading *Flyover Lives*, in between admiring the artful prose of this courageous writer. By *courageous* I mean that the book exemplifies the kind of psychological bravery that octogenarians come by naturally—to render the events of their lives unemotionally, unsentimentally, and without the saccharine sweetness of a sugarcoat. Johnson's life of au pairs, affairs, married lovers, trophy husbands, French homes, and literary liaisons with the likes of Stanley Kubrick and Francis Ford Coppola seems foreign, literally and figuratively, to this Iowa reader. There are some sublime personal essays here to be sure on such universal midwestern topics as cabins in the woods and Middle American summers (I recommend the contiguous chapters "Rich in Uncles" and "Summer," which are as fine a set of cursory personal essays as you are likely to find in print), but the balance of the memoir is just too remote, too distanced, and too high-flying to merit more than superficial emotional attachment.

The comic-book styled cover art of Johnson's memoir, showing a confident, cartoon woman piloting a single prop plane from the Eiffel Tower high across a Middle America, symbolized by a cartoon barn and a tractor, to a terminus at the Golden Gate Bridge, is, in the end, far too indicative of the book's unsparing and sometimes uncaring detachment. In saying this, I feel somehow as if I ought to apologize to Johnson, whose craft I sincerely admire. But she is so high up in this, her high-flying life story, that I am reminded of squinting up into the eastern Iowa skies as a boy, wondering where on earth all those jet planes

were going and why. The moment they were out of earshot, I promptly forgot to care about those flyover lives, occupied as I was by rock picking, hole digging, and bean hoeing — such homely lives as the rest of us, grounded, are left to wrest from the land.

*The Heart of Things: A Midwestern Almanac*, by John Hildebrand. Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2014. xi, 188 pp. \$22.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Barbara J. Dilly is associate professor of anthropology at Creighton University and an Iowa resident. Her current research focuses on popular culture images of young women in American agriculture. She also applies her research and personal experience as an active participant in the transformation of American agriculture toward more sustainable practices in the Midwest.

In *The Heart of Things*, John Hildebrand helps midwesterners appreciate our lives. He urges us to recognize that we live in interesting places, that we are interesting people. As we read, we can hear ourselves and our neighbors tell our stories. We can sense the importance of day-to-day events like the ones we recorded in those almanacs that hung on the wall. Hildebrand interprets a culturally rich childhood on the farm from his wife's old pocket diary. It was a time and place in which children learned early the harsh realities of life. On February 4, 1965, at the age of 11, she wrote, "It warmed up to 4 above. Then it got windy. When we got home from school had to chase the sheep in because some are going to have lambs." In this ordinary diary, Hildebrand reads and writes a life of useful people. On February 28, young Sharon writes, "Had triplet lambs last night. Went to church. It was nice today too. In the afternoon we thought March would come in like a lamb. We were holding lambs all afternoon."

This work is not just heartwarming; it is also instructive. A celebrated creative writer, Hildebrand is also widely recognized as a scholar and a teacher. He not only understands the Midwest and makes it understandable to those who do not live here, but he also teaches midwesterners to be curious about and reflect on the rich meanings of their own lives. Hildebrand conveys appreciation and deep respect for the extraordinary in the ordinary by seeing the fullness in simplicity. He recognizes how local people solidify group cohesiveness in small talk. Driving down country roads, he asks of every place he passes, "What would it be like to live here?" He sees a whole world of meaning in domestic obligations and reminds us that that is what makes life interesting. Hildebrand notices a lilac bush on the tangled river bank and wonders how it got there. Realizing he has stumbled across an old farmstead site, he imagines what kind of woman planted it and how she

enjoyed the lilac's fragrant blossoms as she brought purpose and beauty to her prairie homestead, of which the lilac is all that remains.

Hildebrand's work reflects his seasoned skills as a writer, but he tells us that writing skills are learned more through insight than technique. Reading Hildebrand's work will get you thinking about your own life. That is what he intends. He writes for an audience not to entertain, but to encourage. As he tells his stories, he gives voice to all of us who have ever sat by a small fire on a summer night and listened to the crickets creak while we watched the faces of our family members. As we look up at the moon, we try to find the words to tell them how much they mean to us. Hildebrand gives us the words. He conveys the honest emotions that are the heart of things.

*The Bingo Queens of Oneida: How Two Moms Started Tribal Gaming in Wisconsin*, by Mike Hoeft. Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2014. xxi, 189 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, index. \$16.95 paperback.

Reviewer Kathleen Ratteree is an independent consultant for the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin. She holds an M.S. in anthropology and a masters of public health from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and has written an article series on blood quantum and identity for the tribal newspaper, *Kalihwisaks*. She lives in Denmark, Wisconsin.

The first Oneida bingo game in 1976 grossed \$85. It was held in the first Indian bingo hall in Wisconsin and one of the first in the United States. Today, the Oneida casino, located just outside Green Bay, is a multi-million-dollar industry that generates almost 50 percent of total tribal revenue. Before Foxwoods and Potawatomi Casino, several enterprising tribes got their start in the gaming industry by opening card rooms and bingo parlors. In *The Bingo Queens of Oneida*, Mike Hoeft tracks the progression of Oneida gaming from a small-stakes bingo game to help pay the civic center's light bill to a vital enterprise that finances health care, education, social services, and capital improvements on the reservation. For Hoeft, "Oneida bingo was born of many mothers" (28), and the book tells the story of how two particularly determined Oneida women, Sandra (Ninham) Brehmer and Alma Webster, created the tribe's first major source of revenue on a reservation where about half the population lived in poverty.

Hoeft focuses specifically on Oneida gaming. However, the story mirrors struggles elsewhere in Indian Country. "Indian gaming" is a recent phenomenon that has rapidly developed in unanticipated ways. It has generated complex legal issues ranging from constitutional clashes over state and federal powers to rivalries within and between

tribes and states. Hoefft, a seasoned Green Bay journalist, has crafted a volume to help readers understand the nuances of the controversial terrain of Indian gaming. The clean, straightforward writing is supported by meticulous research and abundant interviews. Hoefft, a non-Native, is the son-in-law of Brehmer, one of the "Bingo Queens." Although Hoefft's familial connections are not necessary to tell the story, they do add richness to his descriptions of community dynamics and tribal politics. The result is a rare glimpse into contemporary American Indian life.

Although Hoefft focuses on bingo's heyday between 1975 and 1985, when much of the tribe's modern infrastructure was laid, he casts a wider net, situating the Oneida story in larger national politics, such as the Oneida role in the Revolutionary War, the push from their homelands in the early nineteenth century, and federal legislation such as the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, the termination era of the 1950s, and recent efforts to promote tribal sovereignty. The women who operated the early games were not trying to make a political statement, however; rather, they were attempting to support their families. In 1976 the tribe had no tax base and little revenue. Bingo provided employment and gave Oneidas a reason to remain on or return to the reservation.

Hoefft's admiration for these enterprising women is evident throughout the volume. He does detail the lives of male tribal leaders who worked alongside them, but he emphasizes the roles of power, status, and responsibility that women fulfilled. He spends a great deal of time examining the gender dynamics in traditional matriarchal/matrilineal societies such as Oneida. In such societies, women have maintained the role of providers in the community. If someone needs help, "women get together and get it done" (143). One interviewee used the powerful cultural metaphor of corn to explain women's role in the emergence of bingo. The power of women came through their control of the agricultural system. Women were traditionally in charge of cultivating and gathering corn to feed everyone. "Bingo was like a big corn crop . . . it helped sustain us" (143).

Relying so heavily on this particular cash crop, however, is worrisome for many, both Native and non-Native. Readers must judge for themselves whether Indian gaming is "a tool that strengthens tribal culture or hastens its end" (xx). Although Hoefft does not offer predictions for the future, he is sympathetic in his handling of Oneida gaming. He argues that, at least in its inception, the benefits of gaming far outweighed the drawbacks; it bonded Oneidas together and strengthened connections to the non-Native communities of Green Bay and beyond. The ultimate message of the book is one of hope, resistance, and survival:

the Oneida, like many other Native peoples, have shown the ability to thrive in new environments, and they will carry that resourcefulness into the twenty-first century.

*Flight 232: A Story of Disaster and Survival*, by Laurence Gonzales. New York: W. W. Norton, 2014. ix, 415 pp. Illustrations, notes on sources, list of interviews, notes, index. \$27.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Frank Durham is associate professor in the University of Iowa's School of Journalism and Mass Communication. His research and writing have focused on critical analyses of media framing processes, including news coverage of the failed attempt to frame the cause of the crash of TWA Flight 800 in July 1996.

When United Airlines Flight 232 made an emergency crash landing at the Sioux City, Iowa, airport, on July 19, 1989, the DC-10 had lost its steering when its tail engine exploded. En route from Denver to Chicago, it had sustained irreparable damage to its hydraulic steering system, making a crash inevitable. In heroic fashion, the plane's pilot, Alfred C. Haynes, and a passenger who was a licensed DC-10 instructor muscled the plane down, using the throttle to control the rudderless plane. Amazingly, 185 of the 296 people on board survived the massive, fiery crash.

The challenge for author Laurence Gonzales in telling this tale of heroism, loss, and survival was how to narrate such a traumatic event that lasted such a brief time. He settled on an organizing device that works quite well by alternating eyewitness accounts of the moments leading up to, during, and after the horrific crash with a more linear analysis of the forensic analysis of the plane's mechanical failure. An effect of this two-part approach—which carries through nearly each of the book's 24 chapters—is to take the reader to the center of the trauma over and over again in the words of survivors, only to relieve the stress of those vivid accounts with discussions of how and why the titanium in the lost engine failed and why the McDonnell-Douglas design for the DC-10 was flawed.

The effect of this rhythm is to produce a story that is at once informative and compelling without ever resorting to melodrama. In the personally focused vignettes of life on the doomed plane, we are given a sense that every witness's account is being heard and that every victim's last moments are being accounted for in a dignified and meaningful way. In this mix, the science of metallurgy and engineering is explained in plain language, but in a way that unwinds the detective work needed to explain the miniscule but fatal flaw that led to this massive plane's destruction. Achieving a tale of this scope and depth in such readable

form is a great accomplishment for Gonzales, a nationally acclaimed magazine journalist who has written about aviation for years.

A key organizing theme that Gonzales develops to unify more than 400 pages is just how unlikely jet flight is at all. Apart from detailing the mysteries of the jet engine, which he does without ruining the allure of that question, he develops this point about technology within his dual personal-technological narrative to explain the humanity of the disaster. And he does this in a way that draws readers in by allowing them to identify with the innocence of everyone on Flight 232 that day 25 years ago.

Sociologist Anthony Giddens explains this trusting effect in terms of our faith in "expert systems," which "bracket time and space through deploying modes of technical knowledge, which have validity independent of the practitioners and clients who make use of them. Such systems penetrate virtually all aspects of social life." And, he concludes, we trust them implicitly. (*The Giddens Reader*, ed. Philip Casell [1993], 292-93.) As Laurence Gonzales tells us, that kind of unblinking faith in things we don't understand is how humans believe we can fly. And in this book, he shows us that it is how we sometimes survive, as well.

# Announcement

THE IOWA HISTORY Center at Simpson College seeks nominations for the outstanding master's thesis in Iowa history for 2015. Selection will be based on contribution to the knowledge of Iowa history; originality of the subject matter or methodology; use of sources; and written expression. Nominees must have completed their master's degree between July 1, 2014, and June 30, 2015.

The winner will be announced in the fall of 2015 and will receive a \$1,000 cash prize and an award plaque. Three copies of the thesis and a brief letter of nomination from the thesis advisor, which includes contact information for the nominee, should be submitted to Bill Friedrichs, Director, Iowa History Center, Simpson College, 701 North C Street, Indianola, IA 50125. Application deadline is June 30, 2015.

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

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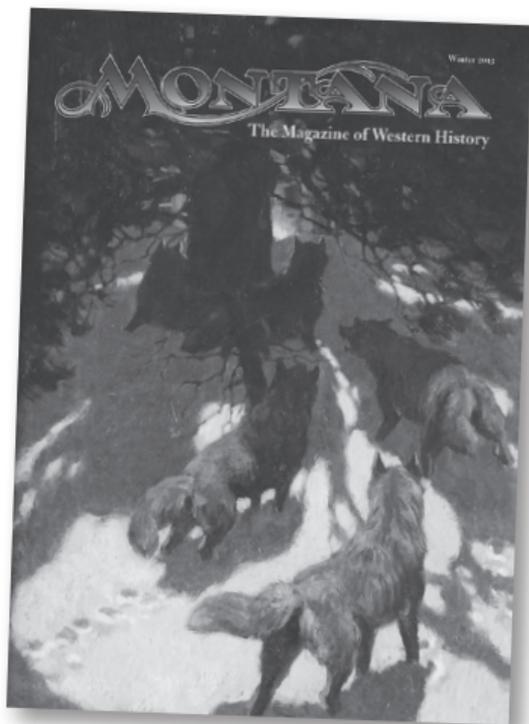
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## Contributors

BRIE SWENSON ARNOLD is assistant professor of history at Coe College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. She earned her Ph.D. in history at the University of Minnesota. Her research focuses on race and gender in nineteenth-century America. Her most recent publication on Bleeding Kansas appeared in *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains*.

BARBARA CHING is professor of English at Iowa State University. She is the author of *Wrong's What I Do Best: Hard Country Music and Contemporary Culture* (2001).

PAM STEK is a doctoral candidate and graduate instructor in history at the University of Iowa. For her dissertation, she is investigating the political activism of immigrant women in Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with a specific focus on immigrant women's participation in labor organizing efforts and the movement for woman suffrage.

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*The Annals of Iowa* is published quarterly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, the Historical Division of the Department of Cultural Affairs of the State of Iowa. The society operates from two centers, Des Moines and Iowa City. A museum, research library, state archives, special collections, community programming, historic preservation, and membership programs are located at 600 East Locust Street, Des Moines, IA 50319, phone 515-281-5111. Publications, a research library, and special collections are located at 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, IA 52240, phone 319-335-3916. The society also operates several historic sites across the state.

## Subscriptions

Subscriptions to *The Annals of Iowa* are \$24.95 per year; single copies are \$7. Contact Publications, State Historical Society of Iowa, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240.

The *Annals* is available on microfilm from Xerox University Microfilms, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106.

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