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In This Issue

BERNARD F. HARRIS JR., a doctoral student at Kansas State University, examines the lives, education, and training of the African American cadets who were trained at the Fort Des Moines Officer Training Camp in preparation for service in World War I. Upon graduation, those officers, Harris argues, helped to chip away at the bedrock of racial intolerance that characterized the United States at the time.

SARAH EIKLEBERRY, assistant professor of kinesiology at St. Ambrose University, describes the interracial work done by the Des Moines YWCA, especially in its Blue Triangle Branch, from 1919 to 1948. She identifies the opportunities the separatist branch and, eventually, the integrated association provided for black women and girls.

Front Cover

Members of a dance team at the Des Moines YWCA's Blue Triangle Branch strike a joyful pose in 1941. For more on the Blue Triangle Branch of the Des Moines YWCA, see Sarah Eikleberry's article in this issue. Photo from YWCA of Greater Des Moines Records, Iowa Women's Archives, University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa City.

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Chipping Away at the Bedrock of Racial Intolerance: Fort Des Moines and Black Officer Training, 1917–1918

BERNARD F. HARRIS JR.

A CHILLY OCTOBER wind was blowing as the soldiers marched on the Fort Des Moines parade ground in close formation. Their buffed boots made a distinctly heavy sound in cadence on the soft grass. Spectators lining the sides of the field waved and yelled support as they craned their necks to glimpse the soldiers as they passed by. The 639 cadets moved with the precision only months of training could produce and executed each formation maneuver with confidence and determination. These cadets were to be sworn in as commissioned officers in the U.S. Army on October 15, 1917, to fight in World War I. The United States had declared war on Germany just six months earlier, and what had seemed like an impossibility then was about to become a reality.¹

This article examines the lives, education, and training of these African American civilians and former noncommissioned officers who answered the War Department's call for the first mass commissioning of black officers into the U.S. Army. Upon graduation, these officers would assume command of thousands of future black draftees who would fill the ranks of the newly formed 92nd and 93rd Divisions and chip away at the bedrock of racial intolerance in America.

1. Emmett J. Scott, *Scott's Official History of the American Negro in the World War* (Chicago, 1919), 90.

TO UNDERSTAND the lives of these future officers, one must comprehend the depth of the bedrock of racial intolerance in America in 1917. The *Plessy v. Ferguson* U.S. Supreme Court case of 1896 had established the constitutionality of state-imposed “separate but equal” Jim Crow laws in America. That ruling allowed segregated spaces for passengers on trains and buses and for patrons of public businesses, such as hotels, schools, and theaters. The Supreme Court would not reverse its ruling until the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954, which, coincidentally, was orchestrated by Charles Houston, one of the 639 graduating cadets at Fort Des Moines.²

Besides the indignities of state-sanctioned segregation, African Americans also had to endure white mob violence, voting intimidation, lynching, and the cruel system of convict leasing, which allowed railroad and mining companies to lease hundreds of convicts they could literally work to death without fear of legal interference. All of these practices contributed to the migration of African Americans from southern states to the North. The manpower drain, especially among black farm labor, caused the state of Georgia to ask for federal government assistance in stemming the flood of migration; and some southern whites suggested that black military draftees should be put to work on farms instead of enrolled in military service.³

One racial incident involving the U.S. Army had ramifications for the future officers commissioned at Fort Des Moines and for the soldiers they would command. On August 23, 1917, soldiers from the 24th Infantry Regiment stationed near the city of Houston, Texas, mutinied. *The Crisis*, a periodical edited by W. E. B. Du Bois, reported that disputes between the black soldiers of the 24th and the local population had gained momentum over time. The situation reached the breaking point when the soldiers heard a rumor that one of their fellow soldiers had

2. “Topics in Chronicling America—Plessy v. Ferguson (Jim Crow Laws),” Library of Congress, www.loc.gov/rr/news/topics/plessy.html; “Plessy v. Ferguson (1896),” Library of Congress, www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/plessy.html.

3. Douglas A. Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of African Americans from the Civil War to World War II* (New York, 2008), 53–56; W. E. B. Du Bois, “Editorial,” *The Crisis*, July 1917.

Form 1 2935 REGISTRATION CARD 8 No. 3369	
1	Name in full <i>Charles Hamilton Houston</i> <small>(Given name) (Family name)</small> Age, in yrs. <i>21</i>
2	Home address <i>1314 T. H. W.</i> <i>Washington, D. C.</i> <small>(No.) (Street) (City) (State)</small>
3	Date of birth <i>Sept. 9th 1895</i> <small>(Month) (Day) (Year)</small>
4	Are you (1) a natural-born citizen, (2) a naturalized citizen, (3) an alien, (4) or have you declared your intention (specify which)? <i>Natural Born.</i>
5	Where were you born? <i>Washington Dc U.S.</i> <small>(Town) (State) (Nation)</small>
6	If not a citizen, of what country are you a citizen or subject? <i>28</i>
7	What is your present trade, occupation, or office? <i>Teacher.</i>
8	By whom employed? <i>Howard University</i> Where employed? <i>Washington Dc</i>
9	Have you a father, mother, wife, child under 12, or a sister or brother under 12, solely dependent on you for support (specify which)? <i>No</i>
10	Married or single (which)? <i>Single</i> Race (specify which)? <i>Negro</i>
11	What military service have you had? Rank <i>No</i> ; branch <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> years <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ; Nation or State <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
12	Do you claim exemption from draft (specify grounds)? <i>No</i>
I affirm that I have verified above answers and that they are true.	
<i>Charles Houston</i> <small>(Signature or mark)</small>	

This image of Charles Hamilton Houston's military draft registration card is from the National Archives. Houston graduated from the Fort Des Moines Officer Training Camp, survived World War I, became a lawyer, and led the legal fight to overturn segregation in American schools that culminated in the successful U.S. Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education*.

been killed by a local civilian. As a result, some of the soldiers disobeyed orders to remain in camp and instead headed into the city with their military weapons seeking revenge.⁴ That act of disobedience resulted in the death of 17 people and swift military disciplinary action against all the soldiers involved.⁵ It also added to southern fears that any concentration of black soldiers

4. Martha Gruening, "Houston: An N.A.A.C.P. Investigation," *The Crisis*, November 1917, 14-19.

5. "Colored Troops—Largest Murder Trial in the History of the United States," National Archives, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/26431266>.



On November 1, 1917, 64 soldiers from the 24th Infantry Regiment stood trial for their actions in Houston, Texas, on the evening of August 23, 1917. Unrestricted image from National Archives.

in large numbers would be a menace to peace and order.⁶ As a concession to those fears, the 92nd Division was later scattered across seven camps in the North and was not allowed to concentrate on one post in the United States as other white divisions could until they reached France.⁷

IN APRIL 1917 the United States declared war on Germany and entered World War I. Congress, recognizing the need to strengthen the army, passed the Selective Service Act on May 18, 1917, to draft the necessary manpower for the American Expeditionary Force (AEF). The act's intent was to fill existing manpower shortages in the army's existing three components: the Regular Army, the National Guard, and the National Army. The Regular Army was composed of established federal units; the National Guard consisted of individual state organizations; the newest formations would be called the National Army and would be filled with recently drafted manpower. The Regular Army divisions would be numbered 1-25; the National Guard divisions would be numbered 26-75; and the National Army divisions would be numbered 76 and upward. The 92nd and 93rd

6. Scott, *Scott's Official History*, 75.

7. W. Douglas Fisher and Joann H. Buckley, *African American Doctors of World War I: The Lives of 104 Volunteers* (Jefferson, NC, 2016), 8.

Divisions would be National Army units filled with black draftees led by senior grade white officers and junior grade black officers. By mid-1918, the War Department would eliminate the three components of the army and instead designate all land forces as the United States Army.⁸

At the beginning of the war, the War Department and many white Americans believed that blacks could not be trained to be officers. Black army units had been commanded by white officers since the Civil War. The plan to call up more than 83,000 black men in the draft and the pressing need for hundreds of officers to command them made this an important concern for the War Department.⁹

Anticipating the War Department's concern, in February 1917 Dr. Joel Spingarn, a white former Columbia University professor and chairman of the board of directors of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), began lobbying for the commissioning of black officers.¹⁰ The president of Howard University, Dr. Stephen M. Newman, another white advocate for black rights, soon joined Spingarn, and, together with teachers and students, increased the pressure on the War Department to establish training camps to commission black officers. Another prominent figure, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Young, the senior black West Point graduate Regular Army officer at the time, joined the effort. Young was assisted by the Central Committee of Negro College Men and more than 300 senators and government representatives. They began a campaign of meetings and telephone calls to the War Department to push for integrated officer training camps. Embracing the growing momentum, Spingarn solicited additional support from General Leonard Wood, the commanding general of the army's Eastern Department. General Wood agreed to help, but

8. Brian F. Neumann, ed., *The U.S. Army in the World War I Era* (Washington, DC, 2017), 29-30; Jim Garamone, "World War I: Building the American Military," *DoD News*, 3/29/2017, www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/1134509/world-war-i-building-the-american-military/.

9. Charles H. Williams, *Sidelights on Negro Soldiers* (Boston, 1923), 38; Scott, *Scott's Official History*, 86.

10. David Levering Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois*, vol. 1, *Biography of a Race, 1868-1919* (New York, 1993), 528.

only if 200 black male college graduates signed up to undergo the training to become officers. Wood's support was important because he had helped establish the famous Plattsburg camps held months earlier in New York to train and educate young men to be officers; those camps, however, were exclusively for white men.¹¹

A search for black male college graduates soon became the priority for Spingarn and his supporters. The Central Committee of Negro College Men employed newspaper advertisements, personal friendships, and college alumni associations to encourage young professional college men to sign up.¹² The *Nashville Tennessean* was one of many publications that published instructions for how black male civilians could apply to the officer training camp. Alcorn Agricultural and Mechanical College in Mississippi also issued letters of recommendation for its graduates to attend the officer training camp.¹³ Each civilian candidate needed at least three prominent citizens in his community to write letters of recommendation to testify to his moral character and ability to command respect.¹⁴ Black churches and local chapters of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) served as recruiting stations, and Howard University students held meetings and concerts to raise money for the recruiting effort. The YMCA in Nashville, Tennessee, was one of the locations selected to examine the physical and mental capabilities of potential cadets who wished to attend the officer training camp.¹⁵

As recruiting was taking place, the War Department finalized its plans to establish 14 officer training camps for white cadets throughout the country and announced that it was impractical to assign black officer cadets to those camps.¹⁶ Spingarn, the

11. Scott, *Scott's Official History*, 82–87.

12. Adam P. Wilson, *African American Army Officers of World War I: A Vanguard of Equality in War and Beyond* (Jefferson, NC, 2015), 49.

13. David M. Tucker, *Lieutenant Lee of Beale Street* (Nashville, 1971), 11, 27.

14. Atty. S. Joe Brown, "Official Notes of the Colored Officers: Training Camp Opens," *The Bystander*, 6/15/1917.

15. Scott, *Scott's Official History*, 85; Tucker, *Lieutenant Lee*, 27–28.

16. Scott, *Scott's Official History*, 86. These white training camps would admit candidates between the age of 20 years and 9 months and age 44. Richard S. Faulkner, *The School of Hard Knocks: Combat Leadership in the American Expeditionary Forces* (College Station, TX, 2012), 32.

tireless advocate, faced this new hurdle by lobbying the War Department for a separate training camp for black officer cadets.¹⁷ Many in the black community, including black newspapers such as the *Chicago Defender*, strongly opposed forming a separate black officer training camp because it would signal compliance with Jim Crow segregation laws.¹⁸ An article in the *Baltimore Afro-American* stated that a “serious mistake is being made by the Doctor when he thinks that the people are taking his segregation ideas seriously. . . . Of course it is a joke. It would be serious if anybody liked segregation that much.”¹⁹ Spingarn replied to his critics by claiming that “the army officials want the camp to fail. . . . Colored men in a camp by themselves would all get a fair chance at promotion.”²⁰ Not all black newspapers opposed a separate training camp; the *Atlanta Independent* and the *Savannah Tribune*, as well as white newspapers like the *El Paso Herald*, the *Baltimore Sun*, and the *St. Louis Dispatch*, supported a separate camp.²¹

By May 7, 1917, the War Department had received more than 1,000 names of motivated male black college graduate volunteers who agreed to attend a separate officer training camp. This positive demonstration of interest persuaded the War Department to establish a separate black training camp on May 12, 1917.²² However, by raising the minimum age limit for officer training camp volunteers from 20 for whites to 25 for blacks, the army rendered ineligible most younger, more recent black college graduates, who had developed a higher sense of self-worth from the recent northern migration, better northern schools, and more opportunities. The higher minimum age limit allowed older black men, many of whom had attended poor southern schools and experienced fewer life opportunities, to serve. Later, some claimed that the army did this intentionally to ensure that

17. Wilson, *African American Army Officers*, 37–38.

18. Tucker, *Lieutenant Lee*, 26.

19. “Spingarn Camp Taken Over by the War Department,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 4/28/1917, <https://newspaperarchive.com/baltimore-afro-american-apr-28-1917-p-4/>.

20. Williams, *Sidelights on Negro Soldiers*, 37.

21. Wilson, *African American Army Officers*, 46.

22. Scott, *Scott's Official History*, 86, 87

black officers and black divisions would fail.²³ At the time the camp was established, however, emotions were running high. In the June issue of *The Crisis*, W. E. B. Du Bois proclaimed, "We have won! The camp is granted: we shall have 1,000 Negro officers in the United States Army."²⁴

ONCE THE WAR DEPARTMENT decided to open a separate camp, the question turned to where the camp would be located. Howard University near Washington, D.C., was one of the first locations suggested for the new camp, but the War Department rejected it in favor of Fort Des Moines.²⁵ The state of Iowa was known to be progressive in its race relations, and the city of Des Moines had a robust black civilian population of 5,762. It would be incorrect to conclude that segregation did not exist in Des Moines, but many blacks maintained a good standard of living; some were business owners, doctors, and lawyers.²⁶ Furthermore, the Des Moines community had already successfully garrisoned the black Regular Army 25th Infantry Regiment in 1903 without incident.²⁷

One major racial incident did occur in the city after the camp was established that highlighted underlying racial tensions in the community. On July 1, 1917, two cadets in full uniform were illegally detained at the Empress Theater in Des Moines. In order to control tensions, on July 22, 1917, the entire infantry cadet class put on a singing concert, called the White Sparrow Ceremony, at the Drake University Stadium as a show of goodwill for the white residents of the city of Des Moines.²⁸

23. Arthur E. Barbeau and Florette Henri, *The Unknown Soldiers: African-American Troops in World War I* (New York, 1996), 60.

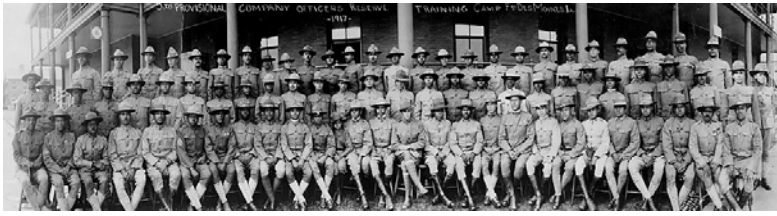
24. W. E. B. Du Bois, "Editorial: Officers," *The Crisis*, June 1917.

25. Scott, *Scott's Official History*, 87.

26. John L. Thompson, *History and Views of Colored Officers Training Camp: For 1917 at Fort Des Moines, Iowa* (Des Moines, 1917), 120.

27. National Park Service, *Fort Des Moines Historic Complex: Drawings, Photographs, Written Historical and Descriptive Data* (Denver, 1987), 9.

28. Ira W. Anderson, "Grand Army Denounces Jim Crowing of Negro Soldiers," *The Bystander*, 7/20/1917 (all *Bystander* articles accessed via chroniclingamerica.loc.gov); Robert V. Morris, *Tradition and Valor: A Family Journey* (Manhattan, KS, 1999), 28-30.



*The 5th Company of the 17th Provisional Training Regiment (PTR) at Fort Des Moines poses in 1917. This company, and nearly a dozen more, embodied the U.S. Army's wartime challenge to educate and train African American college graduate civilians and seasoned noncommissioned officers in the fine art of military science. Charles Houston, the future lawyer credited with the successful U.S. Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, is standing in the middle row, fifth from the right. Photograph courtesy of the Library of Congress.*

Fort Des Moines proved to be a good site for the officer training camp. Located in Polk County, it covered over 640 acres, with buildings, a parade field, and a training area. Each of the future black training companies in the camp would be assigned to a two-story building with a second-floor balcony. The second floor of each company building was living quarters; the first floor was a combination mess hall and classroom for instruction; and the basements had showers and washtubs for laundry. The post was in good repair and well established to receive troops because it had been recently occupied by the 1st Infantry Regiment of the Iowa National Guard, which had been moved to several other camps to make room for the new training camp personnel. Only one battalion and the regimental band remained at Fort Des Moines when the cadets arrived, and they moved into tents on the east side of the fort.²⁹

With letters of acceptance in their hands, many future cadets were accompanied by family and well-wishers to train stations around the country. The War Department arranged for some

29. National Park Service, *Fort Des Moines Historic Complex*, 4, 7; Wilson, *African American Army Officers*, 52; John L. Thompson, "Form Regiments at Ft. Des Moines: Twelve Hundred Men Have Been Accepted for Training in Negros Camp," *The Bystander*, 6/15/1917. For multiple images of Fort Des Moines, see Penelope A. LeFevre-Blake, *Fort Des Moines, Images of America Series* (Mount Pleasant, SC, 2006), 7.

cadets to ride in segregated Pullman rail cars for the trip to camp. For many, this was their first experience on a train. The cadets came from Alabama, California, Massachusetts, Michigan, Texas, and many other states. These college graduate civilians would be joined by Regular Army Noncommissioned Officers (NCOs) who were also accepted into the infantry officer training camp. Many of the NCOs had combat experience. For example, Regular Army Sergeant Harry Houston of Troop K, 10th Cavalry, who would serve as acting provisional first lieutenant for Company 5 at Fort Des Moines, was a combat veteran of the Battle of Carrizal in Mexico against Pancho Villa in 1916. Regular Army Sergeant William Stitch of Troop M, 10th Cavalry, a four-year veteran, had also participated in the Battle of Carrizal. The NCOs arrived at Fort Des Moines on June 15, 1917; the remaining civilian cadets arrived two days later.³⁰

WHY did these African American civilian college graduates volunteer to leave their homes and professional lives to try to become officers in the U.S. Army? To answer that question, we must examine how Americans felt about the war in Europe. The year 1917 was a time of hyper-patriotism in the United States, and many looked on the war as a crusade to protect civilization. This hyper-patriotism was acute among the middle- and upper-middle-class men who would become the wartime officer corps for the AEF in Europe. Such men were the college graduates of their generation and were highly motivated to serve and ideologically committed to the cause of the Allies and opposed to Germany. The army wanted college-educated men to be officers because it was believed that education conditioned the mind to absorb and process knowledge.³¹ Black college graduates shared this high degree of patriotic motivation, with many coming from prominent black colleges around the country, such as Tuskegee Institute and Howard University. Seventy to 80 percent of the civilian cadets possessed college degrees; the rest had military

30. Williams, *Sidelights on Negro Soldiers*, 41; Wilson, *African American Army Officers*, 51; Scott, *Scott's Official History*, 471–81; John L. Thompson, "Three Regular Soldiers," *The Bystander*, 7/13/1917.

31. Faulkner, *School of Hard Knocks*, 33, 35.

experience or business training.³² Earl Dickerson, a college-educated future officer candidate at Fort Des Moines, declared, "It lifted me to the skies, close to my dreams. Here was an opportunity for me to take a direct part in the struggle to bring freedom and equality to the world—a world in which blacks could take their rightful place as a result of this magnificent triumph."³³

When the cadets arrived at Fort Des Moines, they were received by cadre faculty and assigned to training companies. The new cadets received \$75 per month and, upon commissioning, at least \$145 per month. The pay made the cadets popular with the local merchants in Des Moines. To give an idea of the economic buying power of \$75 in 1917, a cadet could purchase a U.S. Army regulation tailored officer's uniform for \$35 in Des Moines.³⁴

The question of who would command the first officer training camp for African Americans surfaced shortly after the War Department decided to establish the camp. For many, the logical choice was Lieutenant Colonel Charles Young. Young was the senior African American officer in the U.S. military at the time, having made the 1917 promotion list to colonel and was on the army rolls as a promotable lieutenant colonel just waiting to pin on the new rank. However, numerous government officials, including President Woodrow Wilson, pressured Secretary of War Newton D. Baker to keep Young from attaining the rank of colonel and commanding black troops and, more importantly, possibly commanding junior white officers in the upcoming struggle in Europe. Colonel Young was forced to take a medical retirement from active duty on July 30, 1917, after a mandatory physical diagnosed him with high blood pressure.³⁵

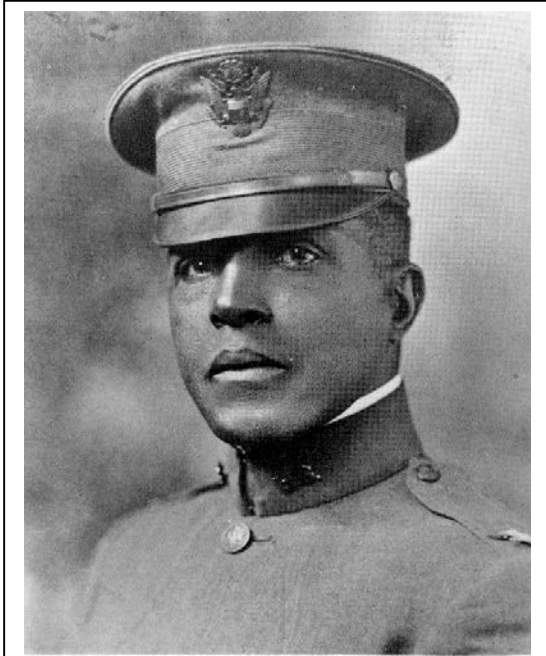
Command of the training camp went to Colonel Charles C. Ballou, a white Regular Army officer who had previously com-

32. Thompson, *History and Views*, 41, 115; "Assigned to Quarters," *The Bystander*, 6/15/1917.

33. Robert J. Blakely, *Earl B. Dickerson: A Voice for Freedom and Equality* (Evanston, IL, 2006), 25.

34. Thompson, *History and Views*, 24–35; Scott, *Scott's Official History*, 89; Morris, *Tradition and Valor*, 28; John L. Thompson, Special Des Moines Edition, *The Bystander*, 8/3/1917. According to the Inflation Calculator at <https://westegg.com/inflation/>, \$45 in 1917 is roughly equivalent to \$875 in 2017.

35. Barbeau, *The Unknown Soldiers*, 67–68; Wilson, *African American Officers*, 48.



Lieutenant Colonel Charles Young was forced to take a medical retirement as part of a successful attempt to keep him from commanding the 17th PTR. Numerous appeals for a review of the medical findings were ignored. Young even protested his retirement by riding his horse from Chillicothe, Ohio, to Washington, D.C., to prove his fitness, but he was not reinstated to active duty until just days before the war ended. Photo courtesy of Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

manded black troops in the 24th Infantry Regiment. The army would officially call the officer training camp under Colonel Ballou the 17th Provisional Training Regiment (PTR).³⁶ Colonel Ballou was replaced after a few months by another white officer, Lieutenant Colonel Henry Hunt, a former instructor with the South Carolina National Guard, who would be promoted to

36. Wilson, *African American Army Officers*, 51; Scott, *Scott's Official History*, 90, 91.

colonel in August 1917 and remain in command of the 17th PTR until graduation and the closure of the camp in October 1917.³⁷ Colonel Ballou was promoted to brigadier general and reassigned to the Camp Dodge training camp in Johnston, Iowa. Later he was promoted to major general and assumed command of the 92nd Division, leading it to war with the AEF in France. While serving at Fort Des Moines, Ballou employed 12 West Point graduate assistant officer instructors. He also used black military personnel as instructors. These included Eighth Illinois National Guard Major Albert W. Ford and Captain Joseph Phillips, along with 10th Cavalry Sergeant Major Eugene Frierson, a 29-year veteran with combat experience in Mexico.³⁸

On June 17, 1917, thousands of people witnessed the oath of enlistment given by Colonel Ballou to the cadets of the 17th PTR. The *Bystander* quoted Ballou telling his new cadets, "This is a momentous hour. . . . Your race will be on trial with you as its representatives during the existence of this camp, and to succeed there will be required of you strong bodies, keen intelligence, absolute obedience to orders, unflagging industry, exemplary conduct and character of the highest order." The *Bystander* announced that the 17th PTR marked a new era in the history of the black race.³⁹

WITH A LOCATION ESTABLISHED and the necessary manpower assembled, the army wrestled with how these volunteers would be educated and trained to be U.S. Army officers. Although the army operated separate officer training camps—one for black officer cadets at Fort Des Moines and 14 camps for white cadets across the country—it decided to run all of them under a single set of operational regulations modeled on the West Point system of discipline, training, and education. The War Department insisted that all officer cadets be trained and

37. *Official Army Register* (Washington, DC, 1918), 568; "Col. Hunt Relieves Ballou," *Richmond Planet*, 10/6/1917.

38. Scott, *Scott's Official History*, 99; Tucker, *Lieutenant Lee*, 28; John L. Thompson, "Nine Officers to Aid," *The Bystander*, 6/15/1917.

39. "Colonel C. C. Ballou, Oath of Office," *The Bystander*, 6/29/1917; John L. Thompson, "How Training Camp for Colored Men Happened to be Established," *The Bystander*, 8/31/1917.

educated to be three things: instructors, managers, and leaders. For example, officers needed to be experts in military drill so they could instruct their future soldiers in the same drills. They needed to be managers who understood the proper methods of supply and administering discipline. They also needed to care for the health, comfort, and sanitation of their soldiers, and they should live in a way that would instill respect in their men. Finally, officers needed to be leaders who understood the tactical employment of troops.⁴⁰

The army needed junior leaders who could think on their feet in any situation—someone who could assess the situation rapidly, recall the correct battle drills, take into consideration the terrain, the enemy, the troops available, and the overall mission, and then issue orders to their subordinates to accomplish the mission. Many in the army thought that three months was not enough time to create this type of junior officer from raw civilians. But the short amount of time available and the huge demand for junior officers convinced even the skeptics that the objective of the work of the officer training camps was not to make experts but to produce practical fighting men.⁴¹ With that philosophy in mind, Colonel Ballou's instructors began the process of turning black noncommissioned officers and civilians into practical junior leaders.

Following the War Department's guidelines, the education and training activities were divided into two parts for the three-month course. The first month, called common core, consisted of personal soldier skills, such as physical training, bayonet training, and lectures (see table 1). The second half of the course in months two and three involved field exercises and company and battalion-level education and training, including lessons in trench warfare, patrolling, and overnight camping (see table 2). The weekly conference lectures for both the first-month core courses and the second- and third-month courses were in theoretical education in which the instructor guided the cadets through military tactics, skills, and concepts.⁴²

40. Scott, *Scott's Official History*, 87; Faulkner, *School of Hard Knocks*, 29, 36.

41. Faulkner, *School of Hard Knocks*, 57, 37.

42. *Ibid.*, 37–39.

The core courses' conference lectures specifically centered on the *Infantry Drill Regulations (IDR)* and the *Manual of Interior Guard Duty*. The *IDR* emphasized leadership, teamwork, and how orders should be developed. The *Manual of Interior Guard Duty* stressed the importance of the commanding officer, commander of the guard, sergeant of the guard, and privates of the guard as they related to guarding a position. The second and third months' lectures came from documents such as the *Regulations for the Army of the United States* and emphasized military discipline, appointment, and promotion of officers and subjects dealing with noncommissioned officers and enlisted men. The instructors lectured to the cadets, who took copious notes and attempted to memorize the material.⁴³

A typical common core daily training schedule consisted of the following:

- 5:30 a.m.: reveille and flag raising
- 7:30–8:30 a.m.: infantry drills without arms
- 8:30–9:00 a.m.: physical training
- 9:15–10:15 a.m.: infantry drill
- 10:45–11:45 a.m.: practice hike without arms
- 1:30–2:30 p.m.: musketry arms
- 2:30–3 p.m.: semaphore (flag) signaling
- 3:00–4:30 p.m.: conferences on care of equipment
- 7:00–8:00 p.m.: evening study on the organization of the regiment

The *Bystander* noted a few additional items on the daily schedule, such as sick call at 4:45 p.m. every day and a call to quarters at 9:30 p.m., followed closely by a bugle call playing taps and lights out at 9:45 p.m. Many cadets stayed up well past 9:45 studying or cleaning equipment for inspection the next day. First Lieutenant Sylvanus Brown remembered "studying 14 kinds of books and making scores of maps."⁴⁴

43. *Ibid.*, 37–38; War Department, *Infantry Drill Regulations United States Army 1911* (Washington, DC, 1911), 93–98; War Department, *Manual of Interior Guard Duty: U. S. Army 1914*, correction to 1917 (Washington, DC, 1917), 12–33; War Department, *Regulations for the Army of the United States*, correction to 1917 (Washington, DC, 1917), 7; Thompson, *History and Views*, 113.

44. Williams, *Sidelights on Negro Soldiers*, 41–42; John L. Thompson, "Daily Program for Army Camp," *The Bystander*, 6/22/1917; Faulkner, *School of Hard Knocks*, 39; Thompson, *History and Views*, 128.

Unfortunately, some of the lessons learned in common core training proved to be dangerous on the actual battlefield. For example, the army taught the cadets how to use signal flags during signal training to pass messages across the battlefield, but once on the French battlefields the use of signal flags was found to attract the deadly attention of watchful German troops, and the practice was discontinued. Unrealistic training resulted in graduates with an unrealistic view of war in general and specifically warfare on the Western Front.⁴⁵

The Infantry cadets conducted their first road march on July 6, 1917, completing five miles in an hour from Fort Des Moines, resting a half hour, and then marching another hour back to the camp. The next day, the cadets marched three miles out to the rifle range, where they used axes and scythes to clear the range of vegetation and prepare it for operation. They also enjoyed their first dinner in the field, using their field mess kits. A few days later the City of Des Moines Chamber of Commerce came out to Fort Des Moines along with thousands of other civilian visitors to watch the first formal cadet regimental review consisting of marching and manual of arms with rifles.⁴⁶

Lieutenant Colonel Charles Young slipped into camp unannounced the evening of July 17, 1917, just weeks before the army announced his unexpected medical retirement, to spend time with some of the former NCOs who had served with him in the Philippines and Mexico. Word spread quickly that Young was in camp. Soon other cadets arrived and accompanied him to the YMCA tent, where he gave an impromptu speech of encouragement. Young passed inconspicuously around camp the next day talking to cadets. At lunch with Company 5 he gave another impromptu speech to encourage the cadets before leaving Fort Des Moines later that evening.⁴⁷

Colonel Ballou wanted to create a learning environment that encouraged the cadets to help each other. To encourage this, he directed that no written evaluations be returned to the students,

45. Faulkner, *School of Hard Knocks*, 42, 55.

46. John L. Thompson, "Training Camp Cadets Make Long March," *The Bystander*, 7/13/1917.

47. John L. Thompson, "What Our Army Boys Say about COL Young," *The Bystander*, 7/20/1917.

so no one could compare themselves to anyone else. Ballou enacted this policy because some of the former noncommissioned officer cadets had little education past eighth grade, and he did not want them to feel alienated among the college graduates, who needed the coaching of noncommissioned officers (known to the younger civilian cadets as the "old timers"). Tension nonetheless existed between cadets because they were competing for the highest commissioned rank of captain. The former NCOs feared that they would be passed over for captain bars by college graduates with less military experience. As a result, many of the younger cadets tried to avoid confrontations with the older cadets. Of course, the possibility of failure also created tension. All of the cadets had to take individual oral examinations; those found deficient were dismissed from the training camp. On one such occasion, approximately 80 cadets failed in their studies and were released from camp.⁴⁸

The War Department's original plan was to integrate one black unit into each of the 16 original divisions of the AEF. However, political pressure from politicians in Mississippi, South Carolina, and Kansas forced the War Department to change its plans and instead create one black infantry division known as the 92nd Division. Later, a second black infantry division, the 93rd Division [Provisional], was formed. Thus, Colonel Ballou would only need to train the cadets as infantry officers and not expose them to other skills such as artillery training in their second and third months. This change to the training schedule hurt the morale of the cadets who wanted to learn the more specialized skills. George S. Schuyler, a former 25th Infantry Regiment noncommissioned officer now serving as a cadet in the 17th PTR, voiced his frustration. "The noncoms became suspicious when none of the rest of the prescribed courses of study given other camps were given to the colored candidates. . . . Nor were they ever given. . . . I personally lost interest after the first month when I saw the trend as did many of the other noncoms."⁴⁹

48. Wilson, *African American Army Officers*, 58, 59; Williams, *Sidelights on Negro Soldiers*, 45; Tucker, *Lieutenant Lee*, 29; John L. Thompson, "More Recruits at the Fort: Prospective Negro Medical Officers Arrive Today," *The Bystander*, 7/27/1917.

49. Wilson, *African American Army Officers*, 54-56, 64-65.

FORT DES MOINES actually hosted two training camps during the summer of 1917: the 17th PTR and a second new organization just as special, the first black medical officer training camp. The medical camp, officially known as the Medical Officers Training Camp—Colored (MOTC), opened in late July. The MOTC offered another opportunity to chip away at the bedrock of racial intolerance, because this experiment was the first time a separate training camp was set up to train black doctors and dentists.

Ranging in age from 23 to 47 years old, the doctors had already graduated from medical schools, such as Meharry Medical College, Leonard Medical School, and Howard University Medical School in Washington, D.C., between 1898 and 1916. A vast range of experience separated these volunteer physicians, many of whom had been practicing medicine for years, from those who had just completed internships. The entire camp consisted of more than 1,000 enlisted men training as medical orderlies and more than 100 officers.⁵⁰

The medical camp commander, Lieutenant Colonel E. G. Bingham, a Medical Corps officer, found only three white medical instructors on duty when he arrived. He requested and received three additional white Medical Reserve Corps officer instructors. Bingham also took advantage of an authorization by the Army Surgeon General to make up for his instructor shortfall by using students he found qualified to teach specific subjects. As a result, he added four assistant black instructors from the cadets in the class. Those four assistant instructors—Julian Dawson, Raymond Jackson, George Lythcott, and Louis Wright—would all be among the 12 candidates Bingham would recommend for promotion to captain for their superior abilities and qualifications. Bingham was also authorized to allow his cadets to give classes in hygiene and first aid to the 17th PTR cadets.⁵¹

50. Fisher and Buckley, *African American Doctors*, 4, 5, 11, 12. The average age of the medical cadets who reported to camp was 32.8 years, with an average medical practice time of 6 years. By the end of the medical training camp the average age was 32, as some of the older doctors were found unfit for military service for an assortment of reasons. Maj. Gen. M. W. Ireland, *The Medical Department of the United States Army in The World War* (Washington, DC, 1927), 269.

51. Fisher and Buckley, *African American Doctors*, 9; Ireland, *The Medical Department*, 263.

Medical cadets attended lectures and were quizzed via oral recitation, just as their infantry counterparts did. Instruction was to be as practical as possible, with cadets observing and then being allowed to do medical procedures. Dental officers received the same education and training as the rest of the medical officers but also received dental-specific training. The MOTC cadets' education and training was broken into three periods: (1) pre-instruction period, July 26–31; (2) part-time instruction period, August 1–26; and (3) active and intensive instruction period beginning on August 27 and lasting until the camp closed on November 13, 1917. (For the first six-day schedule of this intensive instruction, see table 3.)⁵²

In addition to attending classes, all MOTC personnel participated in a 10-mile march to the state fairgrounds and camped under field conditions on October 3–6, 1917. Mess facility space at Fort Des Moines was limited, with the 17th and the MOTC camps running at the same time from August through October 1917, so the doctors ate meals almost entirely under field conditions outside in a tent, partly because the requested \$7,500 to build a proper mess facility failed to arrive before the medical camp closed. Times were also allocated to share the main shower facilities between both camps.⁵³

Despite the conditions, no major illnesses broke out in the medical camp during its operation, and only 34 men came down with the measles. Measles was a major challenge in 1917 and was listed as an epidemic-type disease with an unknown cause in the medical regulation, "Elements of Military Hygiene." Measles was considered more contagious than smallpox and scarlet fever.⁵⁴

As the infantry cadets improved their skills during the training camp period, especially on the parade field, many were given the opportunity to take charge and lead the formation in maneuvers.⁵⁵ The medical cadets were given even more opportunities to lead in training because, once they graduated and joined a

52. Ireland, *The Medical Department*, 263, 265, 266, 271.

53. Fisher and Buckley, *African American Doctors*, 10, 11.

54. *Ibid.*, 11; Ireland, *The Medical Department*, 256, 266.

55. Wilson, *African American Army Officers*, 59.

unit, they would not have superior officers looking closely over their shoulders, as the infantry officers would.⁵⁶ The shortage of medical officers across the army almost guaranteed that they would have little supervision in organizing mobile medical hospitals and infirmaries, supervising medics, submitting regular reports, and tracking and ordering supplies. The medical cadets knew that their ultimate test was the combat readiness of their units through the health of their men.⁵⁷

A FEW DAYS before their scheduled September graduation the infantry cadets faced one last hurdle before becoming officers. During the week of September 14, 1917, the War Department decided that the infantry cadets' training would continue until October 15, 1917. No reason was given to the cadets, according to the *Bystander*, which speculated that the extension could be because of opposition to commissioning the cadets or a test by the War Department to see if the cadets were serious about getting commissioned.⁵⁸ Graduation appears to have been delayed because the War Department had not fully developed its plans for how to handle the thousands of black draftees these future officers would command in the newly raised 92nd and later 93rd Divisions.⁵⁹

The sudden postponement of graduation forced a reassessment of farewell banquets planned for the cadets. Because extensive arrangements had already been made, planners decided to proceed with the farewell banquets and receptions. The cadet companies all held their events with large crowds of invited friends and families.⁶⁰ W. E. B. Du Bois and James Weldon Johnson, both prominent figures in the NAACP, sent telegrams to the 17th PTR cadets to encourage them to stick out the extra month of training.⁶¹ The cadets continued to train for the next few

56. Fisher and Buckley, *African American Doctors*, 11.

57. *Ibid.*, 11-12.

58. John L. Thompson, "Training Camp Here Longer," *The Bystander*, 9/14/1917.

59. Wilson, *African American Army Officers*, 66.

60. John L. Thompson, "Night of Receptions," *The Bystander*, 9/14/1917.

61. Wilson, *African American Army Officers*, 67. Du Bois and Johnson were not the only prominent people to offer support and encouragement to the cadets. As major attractions in the black community in 1917, the infantry and medi-

weeks and were finally rewarded with real farewell dinners and banquets October 10–14.⁶²

Graduation occurred on October 15, 1917, with the commissioning of 204 second lieutenants, 329 first lieutenants, and 106 captains, for a total of 639 line infantry officers.⁶³ The MOTC graduation was not delayed; commissioning was held on November 13, 1917. Of the 118 medical officers who attended the camp, 104 graduated and were commissioned. All 12 of the dental cadets graduated.⁶⁴

There was no second graduating class at Fort Des Moines once the infantry officers and medical officers graduated, even though only half of the officers needed for a typical division were commissioned in comparison to other (white) officer training camps. After Fort Des Moines closed, the War Department stated that future black officer candidates would be trained at one of the 14 white officer training camps, but no large numbers of black officer candidates ever attended those other camps.⁶⁵

cal training camps attracted numerous visitors throughout the summer to observe preparations for the camps and, more importantly, to show support and encourage the cadets to succeed. The visitors included Mary B. Talbert, president of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs. The YMCA sponsored visitors such as the Fisk Jubilee Singers; William P. Carter, professor and principal of the Topeka Industrial and Educational Institute; Dr. Jesse Edward Moorland, senior secretary of the YMCA; Major J. W. Washington, a professor from Hampton Industrial and Normal Institute; and Professor Kelly Miller of Howard University. Besides guest speakers, the YMCA also provided the assistance of Dr. George W. Cabaniss, a physician from Washington, D.C., who left his medical practice to assist with the YMCA tent at Fort Des Moines. Cabaniss had worked closely with Dr. Joel Spingarn to make the separate camp idea a reality earlier in 1917. Providing another connection to the outside world, the YMCA sold the *Bystander* from its tent every Friday starting on July 6, 1917. John L. Thompson, "Mrs. Talbert Given Royal Reception by Des Moines Citizens," *The Bystander*, 6/1/1917; Wilson, *African American Army Officers*, 57–58; John L. Thompson, "Officers Training Camp Notes," *The Bystander*, 7/6/1917.

62. John L. Thompson, "Soldiers Farewell Banquet," *The Bystander*, 10/19/1917.

63. Wilson, *African American Army Officers*, 67. One of the primary guest speakers at graduation was Emmett J. Scott, the black Special Assistant to the Secretary of War. Thompson, "Soldiers Farewell Banquet."

64. Ireland, *The Medical Department*, 266–67.

65. Barbeau, *The Unknown Soldiers*, 62.

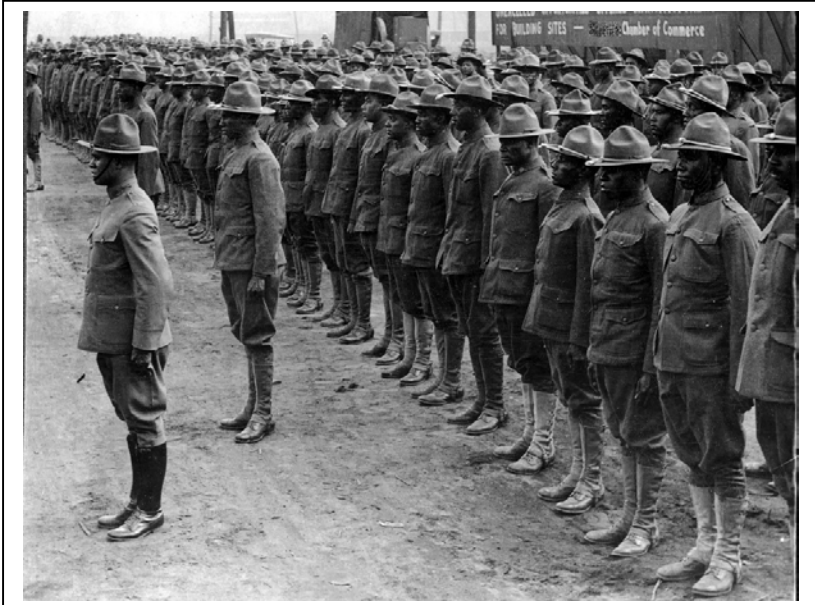


First Lieutenant Cleve Abbott (on the far left) served with the 366th Infantry Regiment, 92nd Division. He posed with fellow soldiers upon his return to the United States from combat in France. Photo courtesy National Archives.

THE NEWLY COMMISSIONED OFFICERS of the 17th PTR were given 15 days leave to enjoy with family and friends, with orders to report to their follow-on assignments with the 92nd and 93rd Divisions on November 1, 1917.⁶⁶ Some men took full advantage of their leave to create families. On October 19, 1917, the *Bystander* reported a double wedding for two local Des Moines women and two newly commissioned lieutenants: Charles Howard to Maud Lewis and Cleve Abbott to Jessie Scott. Lieutenants Abbott and Howard would later report to Camp Dodge north of Des Moines to train new draftees for the 92nd Division.⁶⁷ The rest of the 17th PTR officers would have to travel a little farther to join their units not only at Camp Dodge, but also at six other locations: Camp Funston, Kansas; Camp Grant, Illinois; Camp Sherman, Ohio; Camp Meade, Maryland;

66. Scott, *Scott's Official History*, 91.

67. John L. Thompson, "Double Wedding," *The Bystander*, 10/19/1917.



This image portrays a typical black junior officer with his Montana hat chin strap pulled under his chin and wearing his black boots and black gaiters in front of his selective service men. As the 17th PTR graduates assumed their leadership roles in the U.S. Army, scenes such as this occurred within all seven camps to which the men of the 92nd Division were assigned before being shipped overseas. One of these young officers, Second Lieutenant James B. Morris, was quoted as saying, "I had finally gotten what I wanted – the chance to become a 'bad ass' Army officer." Photo courtesy of National World War I Museum and Memorial, Kansas City, Missouri.

Camp Dix, New Jersey; and Camp Upton, Long Island, New York.⁶⁸ The division was officially organized in November 1917 and consisted of black selective service men from all over the United States.⁶⁹

The 92nd Division was known as the Buffalo Division. It was organized with divisional logistical, engineer, signal, artillery, and mortar units, with two primary infantry combat units: the

68. Scott, *Scott's Official History*, 91.

69. American Battle Monuments Commission, *92nd Division: Summary of Operations in the World War* (Washington, DC, 1944), 1.

183rd Infantry Brigade consisting of the 365th and 366th Infantry Regiments and the 184th Infantry Brigade consisting of the 367th and 368th Infantry Regiments. The division was assigned 24 155-mm howitzers, 48 75-mm guns, 12 6-inch trench mortars, 260 machine guns, and 16,193 rifles. Officers trained in these skills were expected to effectively employ these weapons on the battlefield. That posed a challenge for the 17th PTR officers, who had not received prior training on these weapons at Fort Des Moines. When some of the 92nd Division (formerly 17th PTR) officers were eventually sent to stateside schools prior to deployment to learn how to be artillery officers, they could not acquire the skills quickly enough. As a result, many received poor efficiency reports and ended up back in their 92nd Division infantry units or, worse, a Depot Brigade and were not allowed to sail overseas with the division. The former 17th PTR officers assigned to the 92nd Division, who attended machine gun school after arriving in France, fared better, despite the lack of machine gun training at Fort Des Moines.⁷⁰

The division would start the war with 82 percent junior black officers, the majority of whom came from the 17th PTR, but through involuntary transfers, such as the artillery school non-graduate reassignments to depots or later wartime casualties, ended the war with 58 percent junior black officers. The shortages were filled by white officer replacements.⁷¹

In France the 92nd Division, 368th Infantry Regiment, took part in combat operations with American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, September 26–October 5, 1918. The entire division later assumed command of the Marbache Sector and Woivre Plain Operations for the AEF and actively patrolled and conducted local attacks against German positions from October 8 through November 11, 1918. From August 31 through November 30, the 92nd Division maintained a combat strength of 26,011 to 24,354 men and suffered 1,294 casualties.⁷²

70. Tucker, *Lieutenant Lee*, 34; Scott, *Scott's Official History*, 131–32; American Battle Monuments, *92nd Division*, 4; Williams, *Sidelights on Negro Soldiers*, 47–50, 54–55.

71. Blakely, *Earl B. Dickerson*, 31.

72. American Battle Monuments, *92nd Division*, 6, 27, 36.

The 93rd Division [Provisional] was organized at Camp Stuart, Virginia, in December 1917. The division was composed of National Guard units from the states of New York, Illinois, Connecticut, Maryland, Massachusetts, Ohio, Tennessee, and the District of Columbia, with a few black selective service men from South Carolina. Once federalized, the National Guard units were reorganized into two infantry brigades: the 185th Infantry Brigade, consisting of the 369th and 370th Infantry Regiments; and the 186th Infantry Brigade, consisting of the 371st and 372nd Infantry Regiments.⁷³

Upon arrival in France beginning in December 1917 through April 1918, the four regiments of the 93rd Division were released from the AEF to serve under French command as individual regimental replacements. Despite initial plans for this to be a temporary arrangement, it was later made permanent for the duration of the war. The 369th adopted the rattlesnake insignia and would become known to history as the Harlem Hellfighters. It was assigned to the French 161st Division and participated in the Champagne-Marne Defensive and later the Meuse-Argonne (Champagne) Offensive. The regiment advanced into Germany with the French 161st Division as part of the French Army of Occupation at the end of the war. From November 5 until the armistice, the 370th, known as the Black Devils, served under no separate front-line command, but its battalions were attached to various French regiments, participating in the Oise-Aisne Offensive and the Allied general pursuit of withdrawing German troops near the end of the war. The 371st, which adopted the red hand insignia, served under the French 157th and 68th Divisions and participated in the Meuse-Argonne (Champagne) Offensive. The 372nd also adopted the red hand insignia, which was the original insignia of the 93rd Division [Provisional]. It served under the French 63rd and 35th Divisions and finally joined the 371st Infantry Regiment under the French 157th Division in the Meuse-Argonne (Champagne) Offensive. From August 31 through November 30, 1918, the 93rd Division's four regiments maintained a combined combat strength of 11,487 to

73. American Battle Monuments Commission, *93rd Division: Summary of Operations in the World War* (Washington, D.C., 1944), 1.

10,007 men, and the division's regiments suffered a combined 3,167 casualties during the war.⁷⁴

THE PERSONAL WARTIME SERVICE of some of these 17th PTR and MOTC officers illustrates how these men used their training and education to contribute to the war effort overseas. Earl Dickerson was a second-year law school student when he was commissioned as a second lieutenant at Fort Des Moines and assigned to Company E, 2nd Battalion, 365th Infantry Regiment, 92nd Division stationed at Camp Grant. Because of his fluency in French, he was assigned as an interpreter in the division's advanced party heading to France. On the way, the Germans torpedoed and sank several ships in his convoy. In France he found the French initially curious about or fearful of black Americans based on what white Americans had told them. Fortunately, he found that after the French became acquainted with blacks, they would treat them magnificently. From September through November 1918 Dickerson assumed his duties as an infantry platoon leader in Company E and experienced the horrors of trench warfare, with artillery and mortar barrages, gas attacks, and German snipers only a hundred yards away from his position. He learned the random nature of death and survival on the battlefield as one exploding artillery shell could vaporize one man and leave another untouched. He survived to return home, and in 1920 he received the first law degree awarded by the University of Chicago to an African American.⁷⁵

George Washington Lee was commissioned a second lieutenant and assigned to Company C, 368th Infantry Regiment, 92nd Division. He served under Captain Elijah Reynolds, a former noncommissioned officer promoted to captain upon graduation from Fort Des Moines. Shortly after Lee arrived in France with the rest of his division he was sent to Lafayette liaison school to learn how to signal aircraft from the ground with colored panels.

74. *Ibid.*, 4–6, 23, 36; Robert J. Dalessandro and Gerald Torrence, *Men of Color in the First World War* (Atglen, PA, 209, 106–9); Library of Congress, "Photographs of the 369th Infantry and African Americans during World War I," www.archives.gov/education/lessons/369th-infantry.

75. Blakely, *Earl B. Dickerson*, 29–31, 39.

While stationed in the St. Die sector, Lee was placed in charge of turning off the electrified wire in front of his sector of the Allied trench lines. Each night, when a friendly patrol headed toward the German lines, one of his men would go to the powerhouse and turn off the electric wire. On September 20, 1918, Lee's regiment moved north from St. Die to participate in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. During an attack as part of that offensive, his battalion advanced six miles but then received orders to withdraw. Some of the battalion's black officers, including Captain Elijah Reynolds, were later charged with cowardice and shipped back to the states. Many of the soldiers, including Lee, felt that prejudice played a role in the order to withdraw and in the subsequent charges of cowardice. Lee went on to serve in the Marbache Offensive, but he considered the Argonne Offensive his own personal triumph in the war because African Americans had overcome their psychological reluctance to fight white men and proven their bravery in combat. After the war ended, Lee received a citation for bravery in a successful action against a German sniper during the war.⁷⁶

James B. Morris graduated from Howard University Law School in 1915. During training at Fort Des Moines, he quickly made friends with Dr. Urbane Bass, who had graduated from medical school in 1906 and was attending the medical officer training camp. Morris found that it required his maximum effort to succeed in the academic curriculum and physical fitness training at Fort Des Moines. Upon graduation, he was assigned to Camp Dodge with the 366th Infantry Regiment, 92nd Division, which was composed of young black men from Alabama. Morris married Georgine Crow on April 6, 1918, and shipped out for France in June 1918. He would later describe life in the trenches as not very glorious and would complain about how many of his men were sick. He would also grumble that the smell of the trenches from decay, blood, and rotting bodies was so bad that he often regurgitated his morning breakfast. In addition, he noted becoming half deaf in one ear from the constant artillery fire from both sides. Morris's first injury – burns on his head – resulted from high concentrations of mustard gas from a

76. Tucker, *Lieutenant Lee*, 34–40.

German gas attack. After a short hospital stay, he returned to the front and assumed new duties as a forward scout operating in no-man's land between the combatant trenches. On November 8, 1918, he was wounded a second time, more severely, from a gunshot wound to his leg while conducting a scouting mission. He was evacuated to a French hospital and underwent numerous operations to regain the use of his leg. While recovering, Morris learned that he was going to be a father. His son was born February 19, 1919. Later he learned that his friend First Lieutenant Dr. Bass, who had been assigned to the 93rd Division, had been killed by German artillery fire while administering medical aid to other wounded soldiers. Morris would survive the war and return to Des Moines to practice law.⁷⁷

Almost all of the doctors from the MOTC were assigned to the 92nd Division, with most assigned to the 92nd Division headquarters at Camp Funston, Fort Riley, Kansas, but eight doctors, including Bass, were assigned to the 93rd Division. Of all the MOTC graduates who served in France, Bass was the only one to die in combat. The rest returned to resume their civilian practices.⁷⁸

Dr. Louis Wright was one of the 92nd Division MOTC graduates. Lieutenant Colonel Bingham, the MOTC commander, recommended him for the rank of captain, but he was commissioned a first lieutenant. Wright was assigned to the 367th Infantry Regiment, 92nd Division, then stationed at Camp Upton, New York, prior to the division's deployment to Europe. Wright found the medical work monotonous at Camp Upton, so he decided to experiment with the army's smallpox vaccination inoculation techniques. His successful research led to the virtual elimination of the unsuccessful vaccinations used previously. The army quickly adopted his technique, and his findings were published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* in 1918. On the Western Front with the 92nd Division near St. Die, France, on September 4, 1918, Wright was incapacitated while treating wounded soldiers at his aid station during a German phosgene gas attack. He later recalled, "I was taking care of a

77. Morris, *Tradition and Valor*, 33, 36–37, 39–40, 44, 46–51, 53, 57.

78. Fisher and Buckley, *African American Doctors*, 12.

soldier who could not breathe when suddenly I found that I couldn't get my breath either." After a three-week hospitalization, Wright returned to the front. He was later awarded the Purple Heart, but permanent lung damage plagued him for the rest of his life. While serving in the army, Wright always fought discriminatory treatment against himself and his soldiers even if other African Americans told him to stay in line. This contributed to his unpopularity among his white commanding officers and his subsequent failure to be promoted to captain until the last day of the war, November 11, 1918. Wright would return to the states and practice medicine in Harlem, New York.⁷⁹

THIS EXAMINATION of the lives, education, and training of the first large-scale commissioning of African American officers in American history shows how the idea of a separate training camp for African Americans was born and pursued to a successful conclusion at Fort Des Moines during World War I. From a larger perspective, this history of Fort Des Moines illustrates the harm of institutional racism that was the bedrock of American race relations in 1917 and shows how African Americans overcame that challenge and provided positive benefits to future generations. These officers successfully participated in the struggle to win the war in Europe, and, upon their return, continued the struggle for equality in the United States. Fort Des Moines played a crucial role in this two-front war. In 1917 the U.S. Army was segregated, but the efforts of these men contributed to its official desegregation by President Harry Truman on July 26, 1948. Today's U.S. Army demonstrates how all ethnic and racial groups can work together for the common good. Iowa helped chip away the bedrock of racial intolerance.⁸⁰

79. Robert C. Hayden, *"Mr. Harlem Hospital": Dr. Louis T. Wright, A Biography* (Littleton, MA, 2003), 52, 53, 57, 59.

80. Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum, "This Day in Truman History July 26, 1948," www.trumanlibrary.org/anniversaries/desegblurb.htm.

TABLE 1
FIRST MONTH OF COMMON CORE COURSES FOR ALL CADETS

Subject/Activity	Hours of Training	% of Total Training
In-processing	8	4
Conference (lecture)	64	29.4
Evening study	46	21
Physical training	11	5
Practice marches	9.5	4.3
School of soldier and squad	7.5	3.4
School of the company (half close order, half extended order)	17.5	8
School of the battalion	2.5	1.1
Bayonet training	4.5	2
Saber training	1	0.5
Signaling	20.5	9.3
Musketry sighting practice	7.5	3.4
Gallery range practice	9	4.1
Interior guard duty	2.5	1.1
Field craft and patrolling	7.5	3.4
Total training hours	218.5	100

TABLE 2
SECOND AND THIRD MONTHS OF TRAINING FOR INFANTRY CADETS

Subject / Activity	Hours of Training	% of Total Training
Conference (lecture)	102	25
Evening study	64	16
Physical training	10.5	2.5
Company drill	21	5
Battalion drill	10.5	2.5
Pistol training	2.5	0.6
Tent pitching	2	0.5
Bayonet training	5	1.2
Range firing practice	38	9.3
Field training: Patrolling and scouting	10.5	2.5
Field training: Battalion in attack and defense	12	3.1
Field training: Battalion overnight camping	12.5	3.2

Field training:		
Battalion in trench defense	5	1.2
Field training: Company on outpost, advance and rear guard	5	1.2
Field training:		
Company in attack and defense	5	1.2
Machine gun drill	4.5	1.1
Platoon combat firing	4	1
Company combat firing	4	1
Battalion combat firing	2	0.5
Trench warfare (include grenades, gas and trench attack and defense)	19	4.8
Three-day maneuvers	60	14.7
Lectures on infantry, cavalry, and artillery	8	1.9
<hr/>		
Total training hours	407	100

TABLE 3
FIRST SIX-DAY INTENSIVE INSTRUCTION PERIOD FOR MEDICAL CADETS

First Day (August 27, 1917)

5:45-6 a.m. Setting-up exercises
 7:30-8:25 a.m. Drill and School of the Soldier
 8:30-9:25 a.m. Litter-bearer drill
 9:30-10:25 a.m. Lecture, personal equipment
 10:30-11:25 a.m. First aid, using soldier equipment, lecture and demonstration
 1:00-2:25 p.m. Practical first aid
 2:30-4:30 p.m. Litter-bearer work with and without litter

Second Day (August 28, 1917)

5:45-6 a.m. Setting-up exercises
 7:30-8:25 a.m. School of the Soldier
 8:30-9:25 a.m. Litter-bearer drill
 9:30-10:25 a.m. Field and surplus kits, equipment, medical officers
 10:30-11:25 a.m. First aid, using soldier equipment, lecture and demonstration
 1:00-2:25 p.m. Practical first aid
 2:30-4:30 p.m. Litter-bearer work with and without litter
 7-9 p.m. Reports, returns, etc., pertaining to regimental detachment

Third Day (August 29, 1917)

5:45-6 a.m. Setting-up exercises
 7:30-8:25 a.m. School of the Soldier
 8:30-9:25 a.m. Litter-bearer drill
 9:30-10:25 a.m. Care and maintenance of soldier equipment
 10:30-11:25 a.m. Duties of a soldier; lecture and quiz
 1:00-2:25 p.m. Practical first aid
 2:30-4:30 p.m. Litter-bearer work with and without litter

Fourth Day (August 30, 1917)

5:45-6 a.m. Setting-up exercises
7:30-8:25 a.m. School of the Soldier
8:30-9:25 a.m. Litter-bearer drill
9:30-10:25 a.m. Care and maintenance of soldier equipment
10:30-11:25 a.m. Duties of a soldier; lecture and quiz
1:00-2:25 p.m. Practical first aid
2:30-4:30 p.m. Litter-bearer work with and without litter

Fifth Day (August 31, 1917)

5:45-6 a.m. Setting-up exercises
7:30-8:25 a.m. School of the Soldier
8:30-9:25 a.m. Litter-bearer drill
9:30-10:25 a.m. General Organization of military forces
10:30-11:25 a.m. Duties of a soldier; lecture and quiz
1:00-2:25 p.m. Practical first aid
2:30-4:30 p.m. Litter-bearer work with and without litter
7-9 p.m. Reports, returns pertaining to regimental detachment

Sixth Day (September 1, 1917)

5:45-6 a.m. Setting-up exercises
7:30-8:25 a.m. Inspection
8:30-9:25 a.m. Demonstration and familiarization with Medical Department
equipment
9:30-10:25 a.m. Duties of a soldier; lecture and quiz
10:30-11:25 a.m. Articles of War; Manual for Courts-Martial; lecture and quiz

“A Bond of Common Womanhood
Deeper than All Racial Separateness”:
Race Relations at the
Des Moines Young Women’s
Christian Association, 1919–1948

SARAH JANE EIKLEBERRY

THE CITY OF DES MOINES, like many Iowa communities, has witnessed myriad demographic shifts along the axis of race, ethnicity, and social class over the past century. In 1946 the *Iowa Bystander*, the city’s black newspaper, reported that for blacks visiting the state fair in the city, “the ‘welcome visitors’ signs that glittered and glowed . . . were no more sincere than they were gold.”¹ Although segregation in Des Moines was not as pervasive as in the Jim Crow South, nearly 70 years later *Wall Street 24/7* business writers critiqued the Hawkeye State’s capital along similar lines. In Des Moines, racial inequities and disparities related to home ownership, educational attainment, and unemployment rates were among the worst in the nation.² To address the issues faced by a growing African American community at an earlier period in the city’s history – during the

I would like to express gratitude to the State Historical Society of Iowa for financial support through the Research Grants for Authors program.

1. Dorothy Schwieder, “Iowa: The Middle Land,” in *Iowa History Reader*, ed. Marvin Bergman (Ames, 1996), 1, 7; “Some Signs That Blinked ‘Welcome’ at State Fair Did Not Mean Negro Guests,” *Iowa Bystander*, 8/29/1946.

2. Thomas C. Frohlich and Samuel Stebbins, “The Worst Cities for Black Americans,” *Wall Street 24/7*, 10/6/2015, <http://247wallst.com/special-report/2015/10/06/the-worst-cities-for-black-americans/3/#ixzz4CGdvCEYW>.

Great Migration—black women skillfully worked through organizations such as the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) of Des Moines.

At a time when some YWCAs were reluctant to support the establishment of African American centers, let alone fully integrate existing ones, white women’s willingness and black women’s interest and endeavor led to the establishment of a separatist branch in Des Moines’s Center Street neighborhood in 1919. Until 1946, via the Blue Triangle YWCA, black women maintained an inclusive space from which they could foster race pride, provide valuable services, and develop distinct leadership training and employment opportunities.³ Both the Central Association and the Blue Triangle Branch buildings offered Christian sorority, provided recreational opportunities, fostered political consciousness among their constituents, and helped women secure employment, safe housing, and health services. Although the booths of “the five and ten” were not always open to black diners, by the 1930s the Des Moines YWCA had begun to demonstrate a commitment to “a bond of common womanhood deeper than all racial separateness.”⁴

Following the example set by the historian Nancy Marie Robertson, I examine interracial work as a series of “common debates, rather than shared assumptions.”⁵ Thus, this article aims to peel back the veneer of sisterhood advanced by the National YWCA and examine the cultural work being conducted by the Des Moines YWCA’s “older sisters,” with particular em-

3. Nancy Marie Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA, 1906–46* (Urbana, IL, 2007), 165–68; Patricia A. Schechter, “A World of Difference: Portland Women of the YWCA, 1901–2000—An Undergraduate Capstone Experience,” *Journal of Women’s History* 15 (2003), 170.

4. L. H. Hammond, *Southern White Women and Racial Adjustment*, John F. Slater Fund Paper #19 (Lynchburg, VA, 1917), 18, quoted in Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA*, 3; Mary Wood, interview by Kathryn Neal, 5/22/1997, transcript, p. 17, *Giving Voices to Their Memories: Oral Histories of African-American Women in Iowa*, Iowa Women’s Archives, University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa City (hereafter the archive will be referred to as IWA).

5. Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA*, 179. This point is also made by Kathryn Kish Sklar in “The Historical Foundations of Women’s Power in the Creation of the American Welfare State,” in *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and Origins of Welfare States*, ed. Seth Koven and Sonya Michel (New York, 1993), 43–93.

phasis on the Blue Triangle Branch.⁶ Scrapbooks, publicity clippings, program and conference material, reports, and minutes from the Greater Des Moines YWCA, several oral histories from Des Moines natives and transplants, and the *Iowa Bystander* help us understand why African Americans in Des Moines wanted to ally themselves with a biracialist or segregationist YWCA, how the National YWCA both challenged and supported the advancement of separatist and integrated operations in Des Moines, and how the integration precipitated by the 1946 Interracial Charter affected black branch members and employees.⁷

Despite the patchiness or absence of certain administrative documents, likely lost or damaged during multiple facility relocations, closures, and expansions, an examination of documents from organizations such as the Des Moines YWCA contributes to the historiography of Iowa women's involvement in the long civil rights movement and draws attention to the extraordinary strategies that women, especially black women, used to advance their social agendas.⁸ An examination of the YWCA, particularly its black branches, allows us to place the experiences of black women and girls at the center of the story rather than casting them as supporting actors within traditional structures

6. YWCA of America, "The Sign of the Blue Triangle," ca. 1921, YWCA Blue Triangle Branch, Brochures, Photographs, 1941, 1947, 1988, box 27, YWCA of Greater Des Moines (hereafter YWCA), IWA.

7. I need to clarify the way I use several terms to distinguish types of race relations and cultural work occurring in the Des Moines context. The term *segregation* implies *de facto* segregation in neighborhoods and educational institutions, in addition to the segregation enforced, albeit somewhat inconsistently, by individual business owners. *Biracialism* is used when white and black people share a common facility or space but through the implementation of race-based user times or schedules. *Integrated* implies that a program or facility was open and/or welcoming to both races. *Separatist* is employed when referring to a group that is purposely dedicated to an underrepresented group and entirely or mostly self-governed.

8. Mary Frederickson argues that black women made an effort to publicly praise the efforts of white women and women's groups. For more on this, see Mary E. Frederickson, "Each One Is Dependent on the Other": Southern Churchwomen, Racial Reform, and the Process of Racial Transformation," in *Visible Women: New Essays on American Activism*, ed. Nancy A. Hewitt and Suzanne Lebsack (Urbana, IL, 1993); Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA*, 64.

of African American political life.⁹ For the lesser-known girls and women of Polk County, such documents illuminate a set of voices and experiences that are less often preserved in the historical record. An examination of the Des Moines YWCA allows us to see how black women aligned with white women's organizations and adapted the structures to best meet the needs of their own communities and create more opportunities for future generations.¹⁰ Des Moines native and social worker Marguerite E. Cothorn, one of a handful of black students at Drake University in the 1920s, stressed that her own generation had to "get [their] foot in the door" to ensure that "the next generation [could] get something more."¹¹

AFTER EMANCIPATION, newly freed people faced formidable pressures to survive, thrive, and advance themselves. Race activists devised an array of strategies built upon notions of a collective racial destiny. The idea that African Americans shared a collective racial fate allowed activists to develop different plans of action meant to ensure basic human rights related to economic prosperity, health, reproductive rights, and political gains for blacks in the United States. Civilizing missionaries, separatist black nationalists, and other crusaders of racial destiny adopted various strategies to advance the interests of the race whose collective future depended on "concerted efforts to police intra-racial activity."¹² Black reform activists focused much of their policing efforts on an attempt to mitigate derelict and overcrowded housing, food insecurity, and disease that threatened so many of the descendants of previously enslaved African Americans. Black reform work, whether aimed at boys and girls

9. Judith Weisenfeld, *African American Women and Christian Activism: New York's Black YWCA, 1905-1945* (Cambridge, MA, 1997), 4.

10. Mind, body, and spirit are the three concepts that are represented by the triangle symbol used by the YWCA. Proposal, ca. 1932, Scrapbooks 1932-1934, box 34, YWCA, IWA.

11. For more on Marguerite Cothorn, see Marguerite Cothorn Papers, IWA; Marguerite E. Cothorn, interview by Carol Rick, 10/21/1986, tape recording, Iowa Oral History Project, Des Moines Public Library Virtual, <https://archive.org/details/072clacivilrightsandblackhistoryCothorn>.

12. Michele Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation: African Americans and the Politics of Racial Destiny after Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2004), 8, 9.

or women and men, elevated propriety, specifically the trifecta of morality, thrift, and hard work, as paramount for black communities and black progress. Such work took up the sexual, gender, and class politics of the era to advance notions of black purity and intragroup vitality, promote sexual reform, advance a specific relationship to material culture, and produce various texts about and for African Americans.¹³

An additional component of the early twentieth-century uplift movement was the creation of organizations and institutions that promoted a civil society. Such institutions benefited African American communities and could potentially mediate between black and white Americans. Black churches, newspapers, literary societies, fraternities, social clubs, insurance companies, and burial societies educated communities about the past and present social injustices faced by African Americans; at the same time, they produced ameliorating strategies that advanced uplift ideals of propriety in the face of a reluctant white society. These models largely advantaged the privileged actions and agendas of the black middle class, a status afforded through a combination of family wealth, income, educational attainment, and skin color. Black clubwomen saw their own status and uplift work in direct opposition to the way educators, historians, politicians, and scientists treated African American women and girls as incapable of respectability, femininity, and domesticity. African American club- and churchwomen placed home life and childrearing at the center of their uplift work as a means of improving black communities and dismantling the stereotypes harbored by white women, many of whom allowed racial differences to obfuscate class distinctions.¹⁴

White southerners' campaigns to criminalize, terrorize, and emasculate black men through legislative oppression and the practice or threat of lynching ushered in new notions of gender during Reconstruction and into the twentieth century. In response to white supremacist ideologies and power structures,

13. Davarian L. Baldwin, *Chicago's New Negroes: Modernity, The Great Migration, and Black Urban Life* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2007), 9–15, 30–38.

14. 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), 2; Weisenfeld, *African American Women and Christian Activism*, 14–26.

new configurations of gender, with a particular emphasis on black manhood, permeated many African American social institutions. Influential leaders of some black Baptist and African Methodist Episcopal denominations stressed black women's submission to their husbands and prohibited them from participating in the church as clergy. Politically active black women faced slander and were treated as suspect for not putting the needs of their brothers, sons, and husbands first.¹⁵

Despite the din of male opinion, black women found ways around men's suspicion of their suffrage and temperance agitation and their involvement in the lesser reform movements they helped populate through a social strategy Annette Baxter terms domestic feminism. In response to the status of moral superiority granted to them by their brothers, fathers, and husbands, women exercised their moral acumen to justify "occasional altruistic forays beyond the family circle."¹⁶ Rather than attending cultural events aimed at self-improvement or intellectual indulgence, privileged black clubwomen framed their endeavors outside the home as ones that benefited the community, with an emphasis on the welfare of mothers and children.

Despite structural schisms between black and white clubwomen, their common commitment to evangelical Christian work provided a powerful organizing bond at the turn of the twentieth century. Perhaps both suffered "male complaints at the decrease of the number of pies consequent upon the growth of women's clubs," but that did not prevent them from adopting new reform approaches.¹⁷ Under the influence of the Social Gospel movement, reform women, both black and white, incorporated science, sociology, and biblical criticism into the religious worldview that informed their approach to the social and political issues of the day. Their concept of salvation came to focus

15. Jacquelyn Grant, "Black Women and the Church," in *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies*, ed. Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell-Scott, and Barbara Smith (New York, 1982), 141-53; Weisenfeld, *African American Women and Christian Activism*, 16-17; Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation*, 108-40.

16. Annette K. Baxter, Preface, in Karen J. Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914* (New York, 1980), xii.

17. *Ibid.*, xii.

less on one's individual relationship with God and became increasingly linked instead to one's participation in a more corporate vision of society, one in which individual members remained bound and interconnected to the spiritual deliverance of the community as a whole. Linking spiritual and social reform was by no means a race-specific imperative, but reformers' efforts were nonetheless separated by race, political agendas, and political capital.¹⁸

Both white and black women expressed their desire to affiliate through the Young Women's Christian Association. After its incorporation in 1906, YWCA President Grace Dodge led the women-run organization by the axiom of "not working for, but with" their constituencies.¹⁹ Those constituencies included workers and black women but also extended to immigrants, Native Americans, religiously unaffiliated women, and unwed mothers. Nancy Robertson argues that white women struggled with interracial partnership, often casting themselves as big sisters, a dynamic no doubt exacerbated by the homogenous composition of the YWCA's national board, inequitable financial support, and minimal self-governance afforded to constituents.²⁰

Reluctant to fully embrace the number and ardor of chapters developing within historically black colleges and universities and black communities, white segregationists exerted significant influence over the women's organization. The result was a segregationist legacy buttressed by a policy that allowed white women to capriciously hinder existing or developing black chapters or centers. White organizations in the North and South could simply deny black women's groups access to the resources of the national organization. In the event that black women's groups were brought into the fold, it was almost always under the direct supervision of white women's associations. Black women were not readily accepted as equals; in most cases they were denied voting rights and national representation and their

18. Weisenfeld, *African American Women and Christian Activism*, 32.

19. Grace H. Dodge, Introduction, in Annie Marion Maclean, *Wage-Earning Women* (New York, 1910), xi, quoted in Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA*, 11.

20. Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA*, 11-24.

facilities were kept separate from those of their white counterparts.²¹

In the face of such practices, the national YWCA hired its first two black staffers, Addie Waites Hunton in 1907 and Elizabeth Ross Haynes in 1908. They were tasked with defending the new policies to unsympathetic black activists and existing chapters, in addition to collecting information on existing associations in New York, Brooklyn, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C. By 1910 the national leadership conceded that in areas where no white association existed or was exceptionally weak and a substantial number of black women existed to support it, a Colored Young Women's Christian Association could be established with staff supervision from the National YWCA.²²

Judith Weisenfeld argues that affiliation with the YWCA, despite its support of segregationist policies, reflected black women's "ongoing willingness to organize in any and all arenas" in their intrepid work toward "achieving justice and ameliorating the harshness of African Americans' daily living conditions."²³ Such work stood side by side with their labors in other institutions, offering an additional avenue from which to support black women and girls as many of them were migrating to urban centers. Affiliation with the YWCA allowed black women to create branches in their own communities while drawing on access to resources and support from white associations and the national and international voice of the YWCA. Finally, affiliation with the YWCA afforded middle-class black women access to white women and girls, a critical aspect of the fight against racial inequity.²⁴

The YWCA eventually became the nation's largest autonomous women's membership organization. Its gendered spaces presented an opportunity to address issues affecting women at a time when, according to Annette K. Baxter, most "men had

21. Adrienne Lash Jones, "Struggle among Saints: African American Women and the YWCA, 1870-1920," in *Men and Women Adrift: The YMCA and YWCA in the City*, ed. Nina Baym and Margaret Spratt (New York, 1997), 160-87; Weisenfeld, *African American Women and Christian Activism*, 9-10.

22. *Ibid.*

23. Weisenfeld, *African American Women and Christian Activism*, 35.

24. *Ibid.*; Jones, "Struggle among Saints," 161.

barely sanctioned escape from the kitchen and nursery.”²⁵ Such concerns were not limited to white women. Even within the national YWCA, the City Committee expressed the concern that Hunton’s and Haynes’s husbands “might at anytime recall the loan,” leaving them without black staff to conduct outreach.²⁶

THE DES MOINES YWCA began in the home of Carrie Rawson in 1895. By the time the Des Moines YWCA was incorporated in 1896, the group had already moved twice, once to the News Building in April and then to the Christian Science rooms at 4th and Locust in August. Margaret Hamilton, president of the first board of directors, recalled, “We soon found that we had [built] too low, that the YWCA for which we were making a home and name, had really existed in our town for a long time in the form of a need, and it came in upon us like a flood.” By 1908, the Des Moines Association was able to move to its long-campaigned-for Central building at 9th and High Street.²⁷

Hamilton admitted that many of the first board members in Des Moines were “a very conservative set of women, so [they] moved forward very cautiously.”²⁸ In order to “stimulate interest in evangelical religion among young women of the city and vicinity,” athletics and dancing were used as a lure, open to nonresidents and nonmembers.²⁹ With the hope of recruiting girls and women as members, middle-class staff later introduced religious and moral programming at meetings and required vespers for residents. The class-based approach, embraced by both white and black directors in Des Moines, avoided the bib-

25. Baxter, Preface, xii. See also Nancy Robertson with Elizabeth Norris, “‘Without Documents No History’: Sources and Strategies for Researching the YWCA,” in *Men and Women Adrift*, 273.

26. City Committee Report, in YWCA National Board, Minutes, 2/7/1912, 15, quoted in Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA*, 34.

27. “A Chronological History of the Greater Des Moines YWCA,” n.d., Administrative Records, Histories, 1896, 1940–1995, box 1, YWCA, IWA; “Synopsis of Des Moines YWCA History”; “History 1896–1914,” Administrative Records, Histories, 1896, 1940–1995, box 1, YWCA, IWA.

28. “History 1896–1914.” The first board members were Helen Ankeny (Munger), Carrie Rawson, and Della Marquardt (Coggeshall).

29. “Synopsis of Des Moines YWCA History,” n.d., Administrative Records, Histories, 1896, 1940–1995, box 1, YWCA, IWA.

lical exegesis encouraged by most Protestant faith traditions, but also provided an avenue towards literacy.³⁰

Initially limited to one facility, the Des Moines YWCA, like those in Chicago and Boston, often resorted to segregated program offerings that fit within the YWCA's mission of inclusiveness. Gymnasia offerings at the Central facility were initially segregated by class, race, and age, with exercisers instructed to don a "white middy, black bloomers, cotton hose, [and] tennis shoes."³¹ Modern germ theory, aided by wartime jingoism and an influx of new non-English-speaking immigrants, "heightened white suspicion of others" and perpetuated racial ideologies of white purity and black contamination.³² In the initial decades, white "matrons," "business girls," and "deaconesses" convened during 13 sessions throughout the week, while "colored girls" only met in the gym on Wednesdays at 8 p.m., the last session of the evening. Non-white children received similar treatment for their aesthetic dance sessions, a practice replicated within the city Recreation Department's aquatic offerings.³³ Such bi-racialism, Martha Verbrugge argues, was "discrimination by another name," and "discrimination was particularly entrenched in recreation."³⁴

BLACK MEN AND WOMEN had resided in Polk County for over a half-century before the U.S. Army opened its training camp for black officers at Fort Des Moines in 1917. In nearby Monroe County, blacks and whites worked the coal mines in the racially integrated community of Buxton. Young people seeking a high school education, regardless of race, traveled from Buxton

30. Sarah Heath, "Negotiating White Womanhood: The Cincinnati YWCA and White Wage-Earning Women, 1918-1929," in *Men and Women Adrift*, 100; Weisenfeld, *African American Women and Christian Activism*, 28.

31. "Recreate Body and Mind," 1923, Publicity, Pamphlets, Y Winks, 1904-1924, box 13, YWCA, IWA.

32. Martha H. Verbrugge, "Recreation and Racial Politics in the Young Women's Christian Association of the United States," in *Women, Sport, Society: Further Reflections, Reaffirming Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Roberta J. Park and Patricia Vertinsky (London, 2011), 93.

33. Cothorn, interview; "Recreate Body and Mind."

34. Verbrugge, "Recreation and Racial Politics in the YWCA," 92.

to Des Moines between 1900 and 1920.³⁵ By 1910, census-takers estimated that 3,591 African Americans resided in Polk County, although black neighborhoods were not yet a prominent geographic feature of the growing city. Black women and men of means were able to purchase homes, but after 1910 landlords became more reluctant to rent to black tenants.³⁶

In 1917, with significant pressure from the NAACP, the U.S. Army established the first officer training program for African Americans at an abandoned cavalry outpost near Des Moines, “far from the east-coast media.” James B. Morris Sr., Des Moines lawyer and owner of the African American weekly the *Iowa Bystander*, speculated that if “you [were] going to put a thousand negroes in one town,” a town like Des Moines, where “people [got] along,” was preferable to a southern town.³⁷ Yet Des Moines pharmacy owner James Mitchell recalled several incidents that indicated that, “at this time, things were not all good in Des Moines.” During a visit to a café on Mulberry Street in 1917, the camp’s commanding officer, Colonel Charles Ballou, responded indignantly to the crispy pieces of meat served to his black recruits. Ballou drew attention to the disrespectful portions and threatened to “put the town under martial law.” Although the future black officers likely needed no reminder, the future general told the recruits that they would need to work extra hard “to be recognized” in the existing system.³⁸

35. Richard M. Breaux, “‘We Were All Mixed Together’: Race, Schooling, and the Legacy of Black Teachers in Buxton, 1900–1920,” *Annals of Iowa* 65 (2006), 301–28. For more on Buxton, see Rachele Chase, *Lost Buxton* (Charleston, SC, 2017).

36. Leola Nelson Bergmann, *The Negro in Iowa*, 2nd ed. (Iowa City, 1969), 48; Wood interview, 17.

37. Robert V. Morris, “Black Officers at Fort Des Moines in World War I,” www.iptv.org/iowapathways/mypath/black-officers-fort-des-moines-ww-i; James Mitchell and James B. Morris, interview by Elaine Estes and James Hatch, 2/20/1975, tape recording, Iowa Oral History Project, Des Moines Public Library Virtual, <https://archive.org/details/FortDesMoinesColoredOfficersTraining1917>. For more on James B. Morris Sr., see Henry G. La Brie III, “James B. Morris Sr. and the *Iowa Bystander*,” *Annals of Iowa* 42 (1974), 314–22; Tom Longden, “J. B. Morris,” *Des Moines Register*, <http://data.desmoinesregister.com/famous-iowans/jb-morris>; and Robert V. Morris, *Tradition and Valor: A Family Journey* (Manhattan, KS, 1999).

38. Mitchell and Morris interview.

Because of the shortage of male and immigrant labor during World War I, industrialists had to work to recruit laborers, opening the door for black men and white women. With many women living away from home, the Des Moines YWCA, among other private groups, provided lodging for transients and permanent residents, a practice it continued for two decades. Such lodgings were often segregated by race and religion.³⁹

A newspaper advertisement for the YWCA portrayed a young white woman seeking the help of volunteers to reach the YWCA building. The "girl stranger" registered and received a room assignment before "the Friendship Club [got] in its work with an informal welcome," helping the transient to unpack and directing her toward "plenty of fun and exercise in a well-equipped gymnasium." With the help of the YWCA Employment Bureau, she could soon begin "the hunt for a job."⁴⁰ YWCA literature emphasized the deleterious effects of 10- to 14-hour shifts that exhausted women's frames, depressed their spirits, and wholly justified "an absolute need of cheerful social influences."⁴¹

White settlement houses and YWCAs, often managed by middle-class women adhering to strict codes of Victorian propriety and femininity, adjusted to meet the needs of a new type of single industrial woman who "demanded more than friendly feelings." More likely "to smoke, to drink alcohol, to dance, and to experiment with their sexuality," the white wage-earning

39. YWCA of America, "The Sign of the Blue Triangle"; Alice Kessler-Harris, *A Woman's Wage: Historical Meanings and Social Consequences* (Louisville, KY, 1990), 13. Other boarding homes constructed to meet wartime housing needs included the Catholic-run St. Catherine's Home on West Grand Avenue. After the armistice, a nondenominational Martha Washington Hotel for Girls was planned for employed and unemployed women. "Business Women's Home One of the City's Most Useful and Efficient Institutions," *Des Moines Capital*, 2/19/1919; "Des Moines Girls Hotel Assured, Plans Provide Up to Date Worker's Home," *Des Moines Register*, 2/23/1919, Publicity, Newspaper Clippings, YWCA Hostess House, 1919, box 13, YWCA, IWA.

40. "How the YWCA Greets 'The Girl Stranger,'" *Des Moines Capital Tribune*, ca. February 1925, Publicity and Newspaper Clippings and Photographs, 1913, 1923-1926, box 13, YWCA, IWA.

41. Second Annual Report of the Officers of Young Ladies' Christian Union (New York, 1873), 6, in Weisenfeld, *African American Women and Christian Activism*, 29.

woman, Sarah Heath argues, “was much more resilient, self-sufficient, and assertive than many middle-class reformers liked their protégées to be.” Reformers, believing that their charges needed protection from urban blight and vice, engaged in a variety of policing efforts that emphasized the extension of their organization as an extradomestic space. The Business Women’s Home on Pleasant Street in Des Moines, for example, claimed to do “everything possible . . . to enable the girls to live in as home-like a way as possible . . . in order that they may have less and less inclination to go downtown in the evenings.”⁴²

During World War I the national YWCA recognized that African American women and girls entering industry had limited recreational opportunities. In response, the organization aggressively facilitated a three-fold expansion of black free-standing associations and affiliated branches, enlisting black YWCA national staff and the War Work Council to obtain personnel and provide programming for black women and girls. Before World War I, nine black women were paid to work at 16 centers. By 1921, there were 10 black secretaries, 109 workers in local associations, 29 branches, and 29 unaffiliated chapters.⁴³ Marshalling the YWCA’s strong postwar financial position, the organization expanded programming efforts to include black girls and created leadership positions for black women, affirming white women’s claims of advancing American democracy and patriotism through Christianity. The efforts African Americans made in the war effort as full citizens, as opposed to wards of the state, fueled optimism as they approached war work with the YWCA and in the armed services. Although the YWCA and YMCA expanded offerings for black women and men, when the organization eventually created hostess houses for black men, black hostess house directors reported to white directors and few black women were sent abroad to work with black troops. In 1920, one year after the Red Summer, a summer that saw 25 race riots, the YWCA dissolved the existing War Work Campaign and earmarked only 4 percent of its budget for programs

42. Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA*, 78; Heath, “Negotiating White Womanhood,” 87; “Business Women’s Home.”

43. YWCA of America, “The Sign of the Blue Triangle.”

for black women and interracial work.⁴⁴ Although black women in Des Moines would benefit from this purse, the existing paths for interracial cooperation were often offset by the organization's commitment to segregation.

BY 1920, at least 5,837 African Americans lived in Polk County, a 50 percent increase over 1910.⁴⁵ Many of the college-educated men recruited for officer training at Fort Des Moines were graduates and faculty from Yale, Harvard, Tuskegee, and Howard. According to Des Moines native Mary Wood, the recruits "were impressed with Des Moines and saw opportunities . . . and when they got out of the service they brought their families . . . here." According to Wood, the middle-class wives and sisters were accustomed to segregated YWCA branches and college chapters, which "had meant a great deal to them, and so they were interested in having something of that kind."⁴⁶ Historically black colleges and universities had been quick to embrace the movement, as both the YWCA and YMCA united learning and spiritual development through mission work with poor black communities. Schools such as Wilberforce University provided "rest rooms"—respectable gathering spaces—for black college women at a time when they were rarely welcome at off-campus restaurants. In addition to support from faculty, these spaces provided a natural home for college YWCA chapters. After a black branch was established in Des Moines, numerous black sororities used the space to hold meetings.⁴⁷

Both men and women met at Des Moines's Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church to organize groups dedicated to establishing a YMCA and YWCA on Des Moines's east side. The Blue Triangle YWCA organized in 1918, with white Vassar College alumna Della (Marquardt) Coggeshall serving as chair;

44. Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA*, 51–61.

45. 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), 44.

46. Wood interview, 15.

47. Cothorn interview; Jones, "Struggle among Saints," 164; "1940 Annual Meeting, Blue Triangle YWCA," Blue Triangle Scrapbook, 1935–39, box 20, YWCA, IWA.



A group of young women pose in front of the building on 10th Street in Des Moines used in the 1920s for the Blue Triangle Branch of the YWCA. Photo from State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines.

the National YWCA sent black staffer Beulah G. McNeill served as temporary branch secretary. In 1919 the branch began offering programming to women and girls from a small home on the 700 block of 10th Street, providing black girls an after-school respite.⁴⁸

For black school-age girls who only had white teachers, the Blue Triangle Branch was a formative space where girls could interact with college degree-holding staffers like McNeill, Virginia Robinson, Regina Crawford, Frances M. Banks, Ruth Marie Brown, and Adah (Hyde) Johnson, one of the first black women to graduate from the University of Iowa.⁴⁹ Branches provided practical work experiences and leadership training that helped

48. "East Side Branch of YWCA Sought by Negro Women," *Des Moines Register*, n.d., YMCA, Iowa vertical file, Special Collections, Des Moines Public Library, Des Moines; "History of Young Women's Christian Association Work with Colored Women and Girls of Des Moines, Iowa," ca. 1942, History, 1942, 1975, box 20, YWCA, IWA; "A Bit More about the Blue Triangle Branch and Racial Integration, as told by Adah Johnson to Virginia Van Liew," n.d., *ibid.*

49. "Adah F. Johnson," 2/7/1988, YWCA Blue Triangle Branch, Brochures, Obituaries, Photographs, 1941, 1947, 1988, box 20, YWCA, IWA; "History of YWCA Work with Colored Women and Girls of Des Moines"; "Blue Triangle (Colored) Branch," *Inklings of the YWCA*, 4/27/1927, 2, Publicity, *Inklings*, 1913-1928, box 13, YWCA, IWA.

many of the girls ascend into other black agencies and institutions by the close of the 1930s. In 1927 35 volunteers and a branch secretary served more than 500 women and girls by overseeing the Girl Reserve program, leading vesper services, supervising campers and teen advisers, and organizing financial campaigns and membership drives. Mary Wood remembers gaining a wide variety of experiences: "I practically lived there! [I did] their typing, their vesper services, the scrubbing of the floors—I did everything." Her impressionable experiences with the Blue Triangle Branch sparked an entire career with the organization. In 1956 Wood became the first African American to hold the title of executive director of a major metropolitan YWCA, first in Buffalo and later in Pittsburgh.⁵⁰

New branches customarily received visits from members of the national staff. National Secretary for Colored Work Cordella Winn visited the Blue Triangle Branch several times within its first decade. Winn urged the Des Moines YWCA board to create more leadership opportunities for black women. After the Blue Triangle Branch moved to another house at 1227 School Street in 1924, it continued to be managed by a four-person Committee of Management. Although branch members elected the committee members, branch members were not allowed to serve on the Des Moines YWCA board or vote for its members.

Some opportunities for interracial work did occur at the club level. The More the Merrier Club, for example, invited women who worked from home or who were employed as domestics or child-care workers to participate in racially integrated parties and field trips. Between World War I and World War II, 90 percent of black working women, including Mary Wood's mother, Rose, worked from their homes doing what Des Moines native and social worker Marguerite (Esters) Cothorn recalled was "a lot of rubbing and scrubbing, and starch and bluing, and ironing."⁵¹

50. Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA*, 193; Wood interview, 11; Kathryn Neal, Introduction, "Interview with Mary Wood, 5/22/1997," *Giving Voices to Their Memories: Oral Histories of African-American Women in Iowa*, IWA.

51. Industrial Department of the Des Moines YWCA, "Girls' Doings at the YWCA," *Publicity, Pamphlets and Y Winks, 1904-1924*, box 13, YWCA, IWA; Goudy, "Select Demographics," 35; Cothorn interview; Wood interview, 17.

While black women in Des Moines were settling into their separate and unequal places within the association, the national YWCA began battering its institutional hatches against the YMCA's postwar efforts to expand its work to include girls and women. Stiff competition for underrepresented regions, populations, and benefactors added to the fervor. One secretary from Cincinnati took a long view, writing that "while I believe in the outlawry of war, I am afraid that local combats will be necessary for a few years."⁵² Using sociological arguments, the YWCA attacked the unnaturalness of same-sex spaces and institutions.⁵³ The aftermath of woman suffrage, the rise of a consumer-driven economy, and new Freudian theories about latent sexuality promoted a new heterosocial culture everywhere from college campuses to reform organizations. Still, many women attempted to brave the cultural storm from their respective settlement houses, missions, and political parties. Within professions they found themselves placed in a gendered hierarchy "without real power." Robertson argues that "what for men then were debates about wholesomeness, efficiency, and giving communities what they wanted were, for women, questions about their power in the organization and agency within the broader society."⁵⁴ National YWCA staff objected "to only being consulted about the church carpet," insisting that they wanted to act on their own expertise and training. "We want to do our own thinking," wrote YWCA national board president Emma Bailey Speer, "and that process leads to amusement when some worthy brother thinks he is 'saving the family' by getting Mr. Jones and Mrs. Robinson in the same swimming pool."⁵⁵

52. Regina Bannan, "Management by Women: The First Twenty-Five Years of the YWCA National Board, 1906-1931" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1994), 62-63, in Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA*, 102.

53. Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA*, 102-3.

54. *Ibid.*, 105, 108. See also Joan Jacobs Brumberg and Nancy Tomes, "Women in the Professions: A Research Agenda for American Historians," *Reviews in American History* 10 (1982), 284; Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Alma Mater: Design and Experience in the Women's Colleges from Their Nineteenth-Century Beginnings to the 1930s* (New York, 1984), 180.

55. Emma Bailey Speer, "What Does the Woman Want: Men Wonder, But Women Know," *Women's Press* 22 (July 1928), 456-57 (reprinted from *Association Men*), in Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA*, 113.

Most women of the YWCA, such as National Secretary to the Negro Board Eva Bowles, warned against following the path of their male counterparts by falling “for the bait of” glossy, segregated buildings. They urged the YWCA not “to see their own work in terms of equipment” and to avoid decisions that would result in the loss of work for YWCA-trained leadership staff.⁵⁶ Such gendered turf wars were familiar to national YWCA staff, many of whom were affiliated with separatist organizations such as the Women’s Division of the Amateur Athletic Foundation, which in 1921 initiated a separatist campaign to assert its own expertise within existing structures of sport, athletics, and physical education for women and girls.⁵⁷

In contrast to the muscular Christian-based set of services the YMCA peddled to its increasingly middle-class constituency, the YWCA shamelessly touted its promotion of interracial sisterhood. Black women’s presence as delegates to national meetings had increased from 40 in 1920 to 100 in 1930. Still, most interracial efforts within associations were rooted in individual orientation or action rather than policy and did little to disrupt the hegemony of white supremacy or segregation.⁵⁸

In Des Moines, the specter of segregation trumped Christian sisterhood when it came to Girl Reserve troops, regional Girl Reserve summer conferences, and sessions at Camp Dodge, where it was feared that shared cabins, canoes, and swimming pools might result in “intimate and unscripted interactions.” Maintaining unspoken covenants of racial segregation, swimming pools were constructed in the heart of distinctly white and black neighborhoods. Cothorn recalled that during the 1920s and ’30s, Des Moines schools “did not want the black children in the swimming pool.” Black students were discouraged by any

56. “Annual Report of Eva D. Bowles to the City Department,” 3/4/1929, 3, Blue Triangle Scrapbook, 1929–1932, box 34, YWCA, IWA.

57. Susan K. Cahn, *Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women’s Sport* (New York, 1994), 57–62; Estelle Freedman, “Separatism as Strategy: Female Institution Building and American Feminism, 1870–1930,” *Feminist Studies* 5 (1979), 513; Ellen Gerber, “The Controlled Development of Collegiate Sport for Women, 1923–1936,” *Journal of Sport History* 2 (1975), 5–6; Betty Spears, *Leading the Way: Amy Morris Homans and the Beginnings of Professional Education for Women* (New York, 1986), 130.

58. Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA*, 102–4, 117, 135.

means necessary from swimming; often they were routed to study hall or orchestra during aquatic units. Cothorn maintained that "that spirit carried over to the playground" and to swimming classes at high school pools, where "black children always had the last class of the day," further reinforcing white assumptions about black ability and hygiene.⁵⁹

In the spirit of the bitter battle for membership, the Des Moines YWCA pulled no punches when presented with the opportunity to compare its biracial practices to the segregated policies at the YMCA. White YWCA staff and black community members harangued the Des Moines YMCA after its board decided that black girls could not swim in its camp pool in Boone. During the planning period for 1934, a schedule revision meant that white boys' and black girls' sessions would overlap. Since the Boone camp's inaugural season in 1923, both groups had been able to negotiate time for their sessions. A black physician expressed disappointment that school-aged girls would have to turn to waters "heavily infested with disease germs and poisonous matter" of the recently flooded banks of the Des Moines River. Editors of the *Bystander* remarked that "with all the frills stripped off . . . it is the policy of the Young Men's CHRISTIAN Association to resort not only to the unchristian policy of segregation which is not even involved here, but by that of exclusion." Eskil C. Carlson, president of the Des Moines YMCA's board of directors, labeled the women uncooperative and appealed to anxieties of interracial sexual relations, cautioning that "something might happen." He also expressed concerns about a potential loss of members and financial support. Claiming the utmost regard for the "excellent Negro ladies" of the branch, he reasoned that the only interracial work that was worthwhile was the type that could be approached without uncertainty. Carlson, like many segregationists in the YWCA, urged disappointed black community members to be open to "patient tolerant progress."⁶⁰

59. Verbrugge, "Recreation and Racial Politics in the YWCA," 104; Wood interview, 9; Cothorn interview. For more on gender and racial segregation in swimming pools, see Jeff Wiltse, *Contested Waters: A Social History of Swimming Pools in America* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2007).

60. "Board Chairman in Defense of YWCA Stand on Swimming Pool," 7/13/1934 and "Secretary Dillon Sanctions Policy of Exclusion," 6/22/1934, Scrap-

Bystander editors refuted the YMCA's backstroking.

There are possibilities always that something unusual might happen and yet if the YMCA and YWCA can't supervise their activities so as to keep this 'something' at a minimum, then who in the world may we look to for it? In fact, if they can't they might as well close their building and use the money to feed the poor. Recognizing that the YMCA is having difficulties financially, the *Bystander* would like to know what institutional or individual is not. . . . Further the *Bystander* does not believe that any appreciable number of the Y's prospective contributors refused to give because they wanted to be fair to Negroes. . . . Of course some people object to being fair with Negroes; some people object to pool tables, bowling alleys, and many other features in the Y. They don't throw them out and why? Because most of the people think them good, wholesome recreation. The *Bystander* believes that most people want to be fair to the Negro; the only thing needed is a leadership with fair, courageous convictions to point that way.⁶¹

Despite the segregation practiced at Camp Boone sessions, this conflict created several opportunities. The YMCA's insistence on its rigid race policies prompted a dogged defense by white women of black girls' access to all of the experiences enjoyed by white campers. Additionally, by focusing on the interests of black girls, both white and black leaders were able to foreground the existence and worth of black girlhood. Such interracial work, while it did not end segregated camp sessions, prompted additional consideration of branch members' interests and voices in the organization and supported the national YWCA's efforts to differentiate itself from its male counterpart's segregationist policies.

THE 1930s ushered in several structural changes in the national YWCA organization and also bore witness to more inclusive policies and new strategies for interracial work. With more than 100 black delegates at the national conference in Detroit in 1930, some staff more boldly proclaimed their dedication to interracial

book, 1932-1934, box 34, YWCA, IWA; "Negro Girls Are Barred from YMCA Pool," *Iowa Bystander* 6/22/1934, *ibid.*; Verbrugge, "Recreation and Racial Politics in the YWCA," 94.

61. "Negro Girls Are Barred from YMCA Pool."

work. Large increases in lynchings, particularly in non-southern states, prompted one white secretary to report that white women needed to be convinced not to confuse compassion for justice and to consider the needs of black communities rather than simply offering individual kindness.⁶²

Students, often the first to demand change, led the charge against segregation after the death of Juliette Derricotte, the dean of women at Fisk University and former secretary of the YWCA's National Student Council. In 1931 Derricotte and a Fisk student suffered injuries in an automobile accident. After white emergency room doctors treated their injuries, both women were sent to a boarding house to await an ambulance to transport them to a black hospital in Chattanooga, rather than admitting them to the segregated hospital for observation. Both were pronounced dead within the day. Derricotte's visits and writings in the YWCA organ *Women's Press* had given many white women their first exposure to a black middle-class woman. Anger over her ill treatment galvanized white members of the Headquarters Committee of the National Student Council, which issued a statement decrying Derricotte's death and pledging itself "to an unremitting effort for a new and different civilization where segregation would be abolished." This marked the first time in the history of the organization when an arm of the national body openly criticized segregation. Soon a new generation of staff members would employ more overt pressure in an attempt to bring white women along.⁶³

Black women like Eva Bowles and Cordella Winn had confidence in their ability to engage and transform the structures of the YWCA. At the institutional and local level, both approached their work with the uplift axiom that encouraged reformers to "bend the tree while it is young."⁶⁴ In 1928 Winn returned to Des Moines to discuss race relations with the women at the Blue Triangle Branch and to help establish an interracial Committee on Colored Work (CCW). First proposed at the YWCA Confer-

62. Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA*, 132.

63. *Ibid.*, 134-38.

64. Mrs. Bush, "Bend the Tree While it is Young," *Colored American* 12 (Jan. 1907), 53, in Weisenfeld, *African American Women and Christian Activism*, 13.

ence in Louisville in 1915, CCWs were initially designed to facilitate "the better understanding of both races."⁶⁵ Too often, CCWs also functioned as Committees of Management for branches, a problem that the national staff faced regularly throughout the 1920s.

In Des Moines, a Committee of Management already existed, although it was not included in association affairs as much as Winn would have liked. Winn worked with Des Moines women to develop a CCW that could function as a "clearing house on technical and administrative questions between the black branch and the white association."⁶⁶ Composed of an equal number of black and white women, the CCW was charged with studying the history, development, and needs of African Americans. The CCW reported to both the board of directors and the branch's Committee of Management on racial issues. In Winn's opinion, the most difficult task involved the time and trust needed to create an environment in which white and black women could discuss race relations and black community needs frankly "and with unbiased minds."⁶⁷

Winn was well aware that whites had long ignored African Americans residing in communities where they had always been small minorities. As black neighborhoods grew in Des Moines during the 1920s and '30s, "the very presence of a Negro in a community [created] a problem in the white mind."⁶⁸ One such neighborhood was along Center Street, an enclave that became one of the most prominent and bustling black neighborhoods in the city.⁶⁹ Due to varying "experience levels,"

65. The Des Moines YWCA preferred the term Race Relations Committee over Committee for Colored Work. YWCA of the USA, *Proceedings of the Eighth National Convention*, 1924, 39, in Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA*, 92.

66. "History of YWCA Work with Colored Women and Girls of Des Moines"; "Notes on Interview with Ms. Winn," n.d., Blue Triangle Branch Race Relations Committee, 1927, box 20, YWCA, IWA.

67. "Committee on Colored Work," May 1929, Blue Triangle Scrapbook, 1929-1932, box 34, YWCA, IWA; Cordella Winn to Mrs. M. W. McCoy, 6/6/1930, Blue Triangle Branch Scrapbook, 1919-1932, box 24, YWCA, IWA.

68. Cothorn interview.

69. Jack Lufkin, "'Higher Expectations for Ourselves': African-Americans in Iowa's Business World," in *Outside In*, 204-10.

members of the CCW in Des Moines, as in many other cities, had to work through unfamiliarity and other traditions as they approached their work as students of "racial understanding."⁷⁰ "It is almost impossible to work interracial," Winn wrote after a third visit to Des Moines, "until you are pretty well acquainted with the thinking and attitudes of each other. . . . Often we do not agree in our thinking, which is not at all serious if we have the right attitude about it, but it helps us to open our minds by discussing frankly and freely whatever faces us."⁷¹

Departments committed to race work were among the organizational casualties of the Great Depression. Prompted by budget cuts of 38 percent from 1929 to 1932, the Des Moines YWCA eliminated its CCW in 1932 and folded its workers into other departments with higher numbers of non-white constituents.⁷²

Despite the dissolution of the CCW, the Des Moines YWCA slowly embraced interracial programming. The proximity to Drake University and the pool of black, middle-class professionals residing in the Center Street neighborhood provided access to well-known artists such as Louis Armstrong, Count Basie, and Etta James.⁷³ Unfortunately, the hospitality of the Des Moines YWCA did not always extend beyond its own walls. In March 1932 Langston Hughes arrived at the Central building to present "an evening of poetry and its relation to the background of the life of the Negro." Hughes's stay in Des Moines was marred by the denial of service in a local hotel and a restaurant.⁷⁴ Ten years later, Marian Anderson returned to Des Moines to perform at the Shrine Auditorium. Unlike during her first trip, she was able to stay in town at the Hotel Fort Des

70. "Annual Report of Eva D. Bowles to the City Department 1929."

71. Winn to McCoy, 6/6/1930.

72. "Committee on Colored Work."

73. Mitchell and Morris, interview. For more on African American entertainers in Iowa, see Raymond Kelso Weikal, "The Song of the River: African-American Music and Entertainment in Iowa," in *Outside In*, 522-53.

74. "Noted Poet to Be Present at YWCA," Blue Triangle Scrapbook, 1932-1934, box 34, YWCA, IWA; Clipping, ca. 1932, Scrapbook, 1929-1932, box 20, YWCA, IWA; Darlene Lewis and Lisa Nakashima, "History, YWCA of Greater Des Moines," 1995, Administrative Records, Histories, 1896, 1940-1995, box 1, YWCA, IWA.

Moines, with the tacit understanding that she would use the service elevator to enter and exit.⁷⁵

In the 1920s and '30s, few restaurants owned by whites would serve lunch or supper to black diners. Rock Island Station would seat black customers, but Cothorn recalls that occasionally the food was over-salted as "a way of letting you know" you were not welcomed. By 1939, the Marguerite, a roadside hotel owned and managed by Arthur J. and Nellie Mae Esters, was one of the safe havens advertised by *The Negro Motorist Green Book*. In addition to black middle-class vacationers, servants and domestics traveling with white families to Lake Okoboji also found respite at the Marguerite. Similarly, various iterations of the Blue Triangle were able to provide temporary and longer-term lodging for single black women and occasionally larger groups.⁷⁶

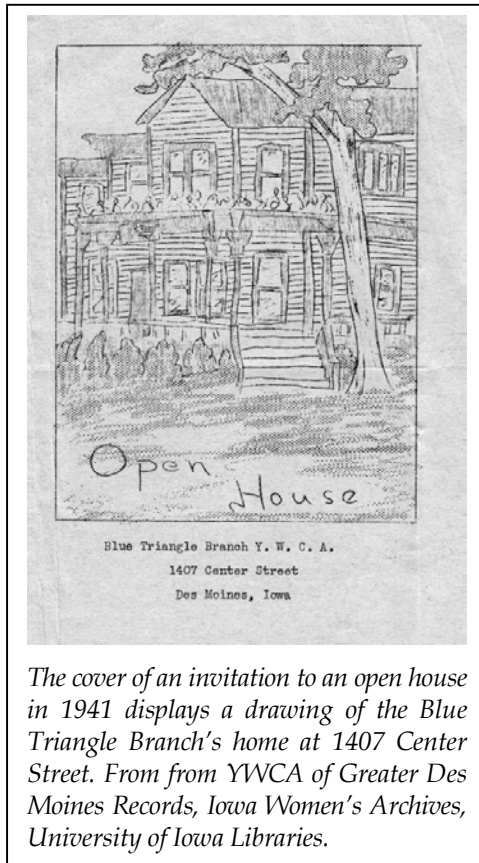
Local talent from the black community, like the Blue Triangle Octet, was welcome to performed at the Central during folk festivals in the early 1930s. The Central also hosted educational lecture series related to African American culture and social experiences. With financial assistance from the Central, in April 1933 the Blue Triangle Branch hosted a conference as part of National Negro Health Week in which mothers, wives, workers, and teens from the community could learn about child psychology and combating preventable diseases.⁷⁷

Although the CCW was dissolved, another long-lasting interracial cornerstone was laid in the early 1930s. Each week, both the Blue Triangle and the Central facilities hosted "Sunday Con-

75. Cothorn interview; Mitchell and Morris interview.

76. Lewis and Nakashima, "History, YWCA of Greater Des Moines"; Mitchell and Morris interview; Cothorn interview; Mark S. Foster, "In the Face of 'Jim Crow': Prosperous Blacks and Vacations, Travel and Outdoor Leisure, 1890-1945," *Journal of Negro History* 84 (1999), 130-49; *The Negro Motorist Green Book: 1939* (New York City, 1939), 11, accessible at The New York Public Libraries Digital Collections, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Jean Blackwell Hutson Research and Reference Division, <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/911d3420-83da-0132-687a-58d385a7b928>; Marie Ross, "Personal Touch," *Iowa Bystander*, 6/18/1946.

77. "Folk Festival," ca. 1932; "Folk Festival Here Tonight, 11/18/1932; Invitation, ca. 1932; "National Negro Health Week," 4/4/1933, all in Blue Triangle Scrapbook, 1932-1934, box 34, YWCA, IWA.



The cover of an invitation to an open house in 1941 displays a drawing of the Blue Triangle Branch's home at 1407 Center Street. From from YWCA of Greater Des Moines Records, Iowa Women's Archives, University of Iowa Libraries.

versations." For at least two decades, these integrated coffee clutches met after church services to discuss topics ranging from employment issues and teen diversions to housing discrimination and the quality of public schooling in Des Moines.⁷⁸

In 1933 the Blue Triangle Branch was able to relocate after receiving a generous gift from the family of John S. Coskery. In the heart of the vibrant Center Street neighborhood, the new home at 1407 Center Street was "well kept and attractive" and "always available for use of groups in the Negro community."

78. "Committee on Colored Work"; *Blue Triangle YWCA News*, 1/13/1933; "Invitation," Blue Triangle Scrapbook, 1932-1934, box 34, YWCA, IWA; Katherine Lucchini to Myra Smith, 9/29/1947, YWCA-Des Moines Administrative Records, General Correspondence, 1908, box 2, YWCA, IWA.



Members of the Book Lovers Club pose in their neighborhood. Photo from YWCA of Greater Des Moines Records, Iowa Women's Archives, University of Iowa Libraries.

The branch accommodated three residents and a gathering space for large traveling groups, such as out-of-town church choirs from black churches, and provided programming space for weekly meetings of the Book Lovers Club, a separatist literary circle dedicated to black authors and black culture during a time when circulation specialists at most public libraries had yet to embrace multicultural talents and tastes. In addition, vesper services regularly dotted the branch calendar, as did teen dances, forums on physical health, family life, dating, employment, and classes in interior decorating, handicraft, basketball, and badminton. Later, during World War II it served as a hostess house for black soldiers.⁷⁹

79. "History of YWCA Work with Colored Women and Girls of Des Moines"; "Annual Report," 1938, YWCA Records, box 6, YWCA, IWA, in Christine Pawley, "Race Reading, and the Book Lovers Club, Des Moines, Iowa, 1925-1941," *Annals of Iowa* 65 (2006), 39-42; Marie Ross, "Personal Touch," *Iowa By-stander*, 6/18/1946.

With the dissolution of the CCW, much of the burden of race work in Des Moines shifted to the newly founded Public Affairs Committee (PAC), an education and action group established at the national convention in 1932. Like the NAACP organ *Colorlines*, branch publications provided regular legislative updates and encouraged members to write to senators and congressmen about important votes.⁸⁰ Des Moines's interracial PAC distributed its own newsletter to members. Common causes included "work for the continuance, extension and enforcement of social legislation" related to disarmament agreements, raising the minimum wage, limiting hours of work, maintaining free public schools, and ensuring workers' right to organize.⁸¹

The Des Moines PAC also encouraged members to attend an interracial vesper service in 1933. Those in attendance prayed together:

Leader: Lord of all nations,
Grant that, in this nation,
There may be none, high or low, whatever his race or caste,
Who is bound by the shackles of ancient contempt,
And barred by his right of free manhood.
People: Grant that all people and tongues may be combined
In a new striving for social emancipation;
In a new enthusiasm of humanity,
Brother working with brother
To give all men their full rights of common sonship to Thee.
Amen.⁸²

Such interracial events served as a weak proxy for racial justice. Despite invocations of the Social Gospel movement, such events were used to placate black women, particularly students, who more actively agitated for increased inclusion and demanded representation.⁸³ Still, by the 1930s, the Des Moines YWCA,

80. *Public Affairs*, April 1933, May 1933, September 1933, Scrapbook, 1932-1934, box 34, YWCA, IWA.

81. "Program Emphasis for 1938," 10/6/1938, Blue Triangle Scrapbook, 1938-1940, box 21, YWCA, IWA; "Clubs Opened to Two Races," *Des Moines Register* 2/16/1947, Scrapbook, 1946-1947, box 27, YWCA, IWA.

82. "Race Relations Vesper Service," 2/19/1933, Scrapbook, 1932-1934, box 34, YWCA, IWA.

83. Jones, "Struggle among Saints," 166; Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA*, 135.

particularly the Blue Triangle Branch, had reinforced many of the prominent strategies characterizing uplift reform work: highlighting the needs of African American communities, increasing awareness of those needs among both whites and blacks, and creating interracial dialogs between community members and folks with the power to influence the broader association.

IN 1935 two black women were able to penetrate the lily-white ranks of the Des Moines YWCA board of directors. An all-white voting body elected social worker Clara Webb to serve a three-year term. Additionally, the chair of the branch's Committee of Management, first represented by Anna Simmons, was given a seat on the board. For black members, an even greater sea-change occurred when women of the Blue Triangle Branch received their first ballots for association elections in January 1936. In 1937, after Winifred Brooks, the branch's Laugh, Love, and Life Girl Reserve president, attended a National Girl Reserve Conference in New Genoa, Wisconsin, she reported that she was the only black student elected to the camp council. In 1938 branch members began to expand their reach within the association with seats on committees for Girl Reserves, Camp, Employment, Personnel, Membership, Program Planning, and even the Executive Committee. Both Amos Hyatt Junior High School Girl Reserve clubs merged into a single entity with two co-advisers, one black, one white. The women who escaped the sticky floor of the branch were mostly middle class, college educated, or married to prominent men in the black community.⁸⁴

As black members gained seats and chair positions on committees, black leaders applied pressure and influence from within the organization. Blue Triangle leaders advised their members that in order to "to be well bred," it was paramount to be "considerate of the rights and feelings of the others under all circumstances."⁸⁵ Such advice played into the "backleading" that many

84. "History of YWCA Work with Colored Women and Girls of Des Moines"; Winifred Brooks, "My Trip to Powers Lake," *Headliners* (1937), Scrapbook, 1935-1937, box 35, YWCA, IWA.

85. Emily Post, "Etiquette Authority," *Headliners* (1937), Scrapbook, 1935-1937, box 35, YWCA, IWA; "History of YWCA Work with Colored Women and Girls of Des Moines."

African American women had been taught to do as the national YWCA pushed for deeper inclusion outside of the Northeast.

The visibility gained by board member Clara (Webb) Bayles gave her access to white women's organizations throughout the state of Iowa. She was able to educate white reformers about problems unique to black Iowans, particularly ones who had recently migrated. Bayles also used her visibility to familiarize white women with the reform work conducted by the NAACP and to encourage them to use their own voices to follow suit.⁸⁶

In general, the Blue Triangle continued to provide a conduit between black Des Moines, the Central, and, by extension, other social reformers. The national YWCA was so pleased with the interracial work in Des Moines that National Secretary Frances Harriet Williams visited to witness for herself the "good will" being advanced by the local. She encouraged black Iowans by noting that their "great work" and interracial fellowship would surely benefit "other sections of the country."⁸⁷

Despite acclaim from national leaders, mild unrest seethed at the Blue Triangle. After branch delegates returned from the national convention in Colorado Springs in 1938, members voiced concerns about inclusion and involvement in the broader association, particularly on the influential Committee of Management and the board of directors. The following year, black women gained additional influence through the election of Hazel Dixon to the board of directors and Korrine Jackson to the nominating committee.⁸⁸ The slow uptick in representation within the association, the commingling of branch Thoroughbreds and association Industrial Girls and Business Girls clubs, and branch efforts to include "women and girls of all ages, classes, churches, sections of the city, and various types of employment" in the Committee of Management, events, and classes allowed for a glacial destabilization of the white middle-class dominance of the organization. A similar change was

86. Marie Ross, "Personal Touch," *Iowa Bystander*, 1/31/1946.

87. "NY Leader Tells of Goodwill Here," 1/28/37, Scrapbook, 1935-1937, box 35, YWCA, IWA.

88. "Program Emphasis for 1938"; Verbrugge, "Recreation and Racial Politics in the YWCA," 90; "History of YWCA Work with Colored Women and Girls of Des Moines."

occurring in the broader community, as the 1930s saw a rise in Urban League and NAACP memberships and an increase in the number of black businesses, churches, women's clubs, and student groups.⁸⁹

The national YWCA extended another nod of approval toward Des Moines by inviting members from the Central and the Blue Triangle Branch to participate in a Standards Study. According to the national YWCA, a "'Standard Association' is one which deliberately, persistently, and honestly endeavors in all that it does to build the kind of fellowship described in the Association purpose . . . a very simple thing to understand, difficult as it is to achieve." Chaired by a black branch member, the Standards Committee evaluated the place of the branch within the association and made recommendations about how to best implement corrections to inequities discovered through the self-study. The committee concluded that the Blue Triangle was a miniature reproduction of the Central Association.⁹⁰

The Des Moines YWCA was happy to report the voting franchise exercised by black members in its association leadership even though only 40 percent of the branches nationally were allowed to vote for association leadership. Framed in a positive light by the report's authors, such characterization likely ignored inequities in pay and camp counselor training and other inconsistencies often found between the associations and branches.⁹¹

Des Moines's self-study of gaps and redundancies prompted a restructuring of the interracial Amicita Club, a club for women who labored from home or worked as domestics. The club, which met at the Central, continued to support such women and address issues related to standardizing home care and work

89. The Thoroughbreds consisted of black high school graduates, whereas Industrial Girls Clubs typically included women involved in factory work, and Business Girls were more often employed as typists in offices. "History of YWCA Work with Colored Women and Girls of Des Moines"; "1940 Annual Meeting, Blue Triangle YWCA."

90. YWCA of America, "The Standards Study," in untitled report, ca. 1939, Blue Triangle Scrapbook, 1938-1940, box 21, YWCA, IWA; "History of YWCA Work with Colored Women and Girls of Des Moines."

91. Jones, "Struggle among Saints," 184; "National YWCA Plans to End Racial Segregation," *Iowa Bystander*, 3/14/1946; Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA*, 149.



Members of a dance team at the Des Moines YWCA's Blue Triangle Branch strike a joyful pose in 1941. Photo from YWCA of Greater Des Moines Records, Iowa Women's Archives, University of Iowa Libraries.

from home. The Central offered many clubs and programs for white business, professional, and unemployed women. At the branch, black high school graduates under 35 were invited to join the older high school degree-holding Thoroughbreds; junior high and high school girls could find fellowship in the Girl Reserves; readers of all ages were welcome to join the Book Lover's Club; and many found their place in interest groups such as typing practice, handicraft, and mixed choir. Black girls and young women were encouraged to follow the "good road to health and happiness" through basketball, volleyball, tap dance, and table tennis. Daring members could have a try at roller skating. Women between 18 and 25 were invited to join the Blue Triangle Dance Club, and older employed women

could “find joy” through “educational programs and recreation” with the Cheramis Club.⁹²

Facing cutbacks and gasoline rationing during World War II, the YWCA welcomed cost-saving measures, such as Stay at Home Conferences, and provided additional revenue-producing co-ed activities for youth, teens, and adults. Both white and black women participated in a mixed-sex choral group. Perhaps even more significant was the way the YWCA embraced mixed-race dances for teens and young adults. Although there is no evidence that black teens were partner dancing with whites, the mere commingling was not a widespread practice. The Des Moines School system did not sanction racially integrated socials and the Drake Relays social was not integrated until 1947. Integrated co-ed Saturday night dances became so popular that the YWCA relocated them from the Central building, which could hold only 500 dancers, to the Tromar Ballroom, a space that held up to 3,200. The branch also provided separate entertainment for black youth through its regular Saturday Fun Nites. “A high regular attendance” drew locals and “students from Ames,” who were able to take a bus and return before midnight. In February 1941 more than 100 high school boys and girls visited the branch to dance and to play checkers, carom, and table tennis. In the summer, smaller integrated socials such as The Barnyard Frolic were held on the branch lawn until it closed in 1946.⁹³

Similar to wartime trends in women’s physical education, programming at the YWCA placed a heteronormative emphasis on attracting members of the opposite sex. Weight control and reducing classes had existed since the 1920s, and courses related to attracting and maintaining a mate became increasingly popular for “bashful, shy, out-of-date” young women. Charm school and

92. Untitled report, ca. 1939; “Clubs Opened to Two Races”; “Let’s Join a Club,” ca. 1938–1940, Blue Triangle Scrapbook, 1938–1940, box 21, YWCA, IWA; “1940 Annual Meeting, Blue Triangle YWCA”; “It’s Your ‘Y,’ Enjoy It!” ca. 1941, Scrapbook, 1941, box 36, YWCA, IWA; “Let’s Turn the Spotlight On,” ca. 1941, *ibid.*; “The Blue Triangle YWCA,” ca. 1941, *ibid.*

93. Cothorn interview; “Drake Relay Officials Congratulated,” *Iowa Bystander*, 5/1/1947; Minutes, Stay at Home Committee, 4/17/1945, Program Stories, 1946–1947, box 5, YWCA, IWA; untitled report, ca. 1939; “Cost of Teenage Centers,” *Des Moines Tribune*, 8/31/1946, Scrapbook, 1946–1947, box 27, YWCA, IWA; “Fun Nite,” Feb. 1941, Scrapbook, 1941, box 36, YWCA, IWA.



The Blue Triangle Branch of the Des Moines YWCA offered a safe gathering place for young black women. Photo from YWCA of Greater Des Moines Records, Iowa Women's Archives, University of Iowa Libraries.

the veneration of domestic talents such as table decorating peppered the programs of the association and the branch.⁹⁴

Cultivating charisma may have been the aim of some programs, but the Blue Triangle Branch women also valued collaborations with Planned Parenthood, the Family Society, and local health care providers. Local white female physician Dr. Nelle Noble and local black physician Dr. Emmett Thomas Scales advised girls and women on more serious matters related to dating, healthy marital relationships, options for preventing pregnancy, and venereal disease. Black leaders at the branch believed that such health education delivered in small groups would have a positive effect on the girls and women in their community and would continue to uplift the race.⁹⁵

94. "Social Dancing," Feb. 1941, Scrapbook, 1941, box 36, YWCA, IWA; "Nobody Plays Hookey at Charm School," *Des Moines Register*, 10/24/1946, Scrapbook, 1946-1947, box 27, YWCA, IWA.

95. "Education Committee Invites to a Forum 'Venereal Disease,'" ca. 1939, Scrapbook, 1937-1939, box 20, YWCA, IWA; Lucchini to Smith, 9/29/1947; Dr. Scales became the first African American chief of staff at Mercy Hospital in 1952.

Lecture series, pamphlets, stand-alone lectures, conference panels, and Girl Reserve events such as the Mother's Tea were among the ways girls and adults were encouraged to discuss matters ranging from curfews to social ills, with a particular emphasis on "religious, racial, [and] family" prejudice. Black women and girls could learn about sexual dysfunction and sterilization and discuss topics such as sexual compatibility and expectations and be exposed to strategies for communicating levels of sexual experience with a mate. Many reformers attempted to "erect a barrier against casual prostitution"; the Blue Triangle YWCA, in contrast, responded to a diverse array of member needs, providing a space where conversations could diverge from social mores dictated by more conservative faith communities.⁹⁶

Facing another devastating war, the national organization took up the familiar task of maintaining wartime "civilian morale" for soldiers and families simply by offering "normal community life." The YWCA in Des Moines provided hostess services for both white and black soldiers in their respective segregated camps and recreation halls. The branch's Girls Service Organization (GSO), chaired by Winifred Brooks and assisted by secretary Barbara Crawford, set out to entertain not only the black soldiers and officer candidates but also the 40 black women selected for the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps. Military personnel from Fort Des Moines could join in on Saturday basketball games and dancing.⁹⁷

After the consolidation of the black branch into the association, the Hostess Club remained one of the most popular and well-organized clubs, with members providing conversation and care for patients at local hospitals. Although the club was interracial, there is no indication that white hostesses interacted with black patients or black hostesses with white patients.

96. Invitation, ca. 1937, Scrapbook, 1935-1937, box 35, YWCA, IWA; "Questionnaire for Mothers," ca. 1937, *ibid.*; Nina Mjagkij and Margaret Spratt, Introduction, in *Men and Women Adrift: The YMCA and YWCA in the City*, 9.

97. "Program Focus," ca. 1941, Scrapbook, 1941, box 36, YWCA, IWA; "Girls' Service Organization Entertains Sixty Soldiers," n.d., Scrapbook, 1941, box 36, YWCA, IWA; "Negro WAACs and Soldiers Entertained," *Des Moines Register*, 8/9/1942.

Save for the custodial staff, it is likely that black hostesses were among the only African Americans circulating in Des Moines hospitals.⁹⁸

AFTER THE CONCLUSION of World War II, Mary Shotwell Ingraham, president of the national YWCA board, addressed the 17th national convention, proclaiming, "Man broke the atom, woman must break the pattern—there must be no more war; there must be harmony among men."⁹⁹ The 1946 national convention laid the groundwork for the Interracial Charter, an integrationist motion that, when enacted, significantly altered the experiences of many African American YWCA members. Although black women favored integration of social institutions, concerns over implementation of the Interracial Charter abounded.¹⁰⁰

In Des Moines the Executive Committee confidently affirmed its ability to move forward, declaring that a sort of practical integration had slowly been put in motion a decade earlier. Interracial "committees, councils, inter-club councils[,] all-association meetings," and repeated use of the Central building for large black and integrated program offerings made it easier to convince board members that such changes were practical, possible, and positive. In the summer of 1946, the Central YWCA hired two black Drake graduates, Joyce Carmon Smith, an assistant in the office of the business manager, and bookkeeper Billie Jean Davis. Smith moved into the Central facility alongside other white boarders. The board of directors approved a constitutional revision mandating that "the professional leadership of the association shall be entrusted to an Executive Director and such other officers as may be required, always including at least one Negro woman in a professional capacity."¹⁰¹

98. Marie Ross, "Personal Touch," *Iowa Bystander* 4/24/1947. For more on the first African American public health nurse in Des Moines, see Barbara M. Calderon Papers, IWA.

99. YWCA of the USA, *Proceedings of the Seventeenth National Convention, 1946*, 11, in Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA*, 162.

100. *Ibid.*, 165–68.

101. Madeline Lambert to the Board, 5/14/1946, YWCA General Board Members, 1936–1945, box 2, YWCA, IWA; "Billie Jean Davis," *Iowa Bystander*, 8/28/1947; "Engagement Announced," *Iowa Bystander* 11/14/1946; "Rededication for

Employees from the Blue Triangle Branch were appointed to the board and various committees, and some black women brought valuable experience from elsewhere in the country. One member of the professional leadership, Bennett College honor graduate Helen Boulware, had been executive director of the Boulware Branch of the YWCA in High Point, North Carolina. Adah (Hyde) Johnson, who had served as executive director of the Blue Triangle Branch in 1945–1946, was reassigned to the position of director of Interracial Activities. It is difficult to assess whether that was an advancement, a lateral move, or a demotion for Johnson, although she only remained in the post for a year. Initially, Johnson received assistance from Dorothy I. Height, secretary of Interracial Education for the national YWCA, who was sent to Des Moines to meet “with a number of groups to discuss the interracial integration.”¹⁰²

Since Webb’s election in 1935, black membership on the board had been inconsistent. In 1948 the board welcomed three prominent black women to the board: Mrs. W. J. Ritchey, Mrs. Marshall Smith, and Lillian (Moore) Scales, who held one of the two vice presidencies. As an indicator of the social standing enjoyed by Ritchey, the wife of a black dentist, she invited the 17-member board to her home for a welcome reception for a new member of the professional staff, Mamie Davis.¹⁰³

A resounding victory for many, the enactment of the Interracial Charter resulted in the bittersweet closure of the branches. In rare cases, branches disaffiliated from the YWCA. Some associations refused to comply, though none were officially excommunicated until 1967.¹⁰⁴ Pittsburgh Executive Director

the Remodel,” *Des Moines Register*, 11/26/2017, Scrapbook, 1946–1947, box 27, YWCA, IWA.

102. Lewis and Nakashima, “History, YWCA of Greater Des Moines,”; “On YWCA Staff,” *Iowa Bystander*, 10/2/1947; Scrapbook, 1946–1947, box 27, YWCA, IWA; “YWCA,” *Iowa Bystander*, 6/15/1947, *ibid.* Dorothy Height also served as the president of the National Council of Negro Women.

103. Charlene J. Barnes and Floyd Bumpers, *Iowa’s Black Legacy* (Charleston, SC, 2000), 66; “Des Moines YWCA and Staff Members,” *Iowa Bystander*, 10/29/1948, Scrapbook, Publicity, 1948–1949, box 3, YWCA, IWA; Executive Committee Minutes, 2/11/1947, Administrative Records Series, Executive Committee Minutes, 1947–1952, box 3, YWCA, IWA.

104. Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA*, 177.

Mary Wood recalled that, growing up in Des Moines, she and other African Americans had experienced “blockades: you can’t do this, you can’t do that, you can’t teach, you can’t be a social worker, you can’t be something else because you’re black.” Wood, the only black member of her graduating class at both East High and Drake University, could find safe harbor, racial solidarity, and encouragement at the branch. According to Wood, “people loved their YWCAs” and viewed their closing as a tragedy. “As I saw it, [the segregated branch] was a stepping stone for women to come from their community into this branch and then gradually work up to being president of the whole YWCA, but when you eliminated this, you lost a lot of leadership in the YWCA. It had its value.”¹⁰⁵

For some, integration invoked suspicion. Robert and Louis Coskery, the holders of the quitclaim deed tied to the last branch location, approached the merger with concern. Their family told the board’s president that the board “should look upon the proceeds from this property as a special fund with which the board . . . may further whatever special projects it may” but that it ought not to be used to supplement the “ordinary running expenses of [the] organization.” The Coskery family was one of many voices expressing concerns that race work would be ignored after the branch was merged into the Central association.¹⁰⁶

In 1947 the YWCA diverted funds from the sale of the Coskery estate toward programming that would most acutely affect black girls, who were still prohibited from skating at public rinks, sharing a Coke in a booth with friends, or frequenting all the stalls at the Iowa State Fair.¹⁰⁷ Teen canteens, date nights,

105. Wood interview, 9, 15–16.

106. Robert and Louise Coskery to Mrs. Guy Lambert, 8/29/1946, Financial Records, Official Papers, Correspondence, Wills, Receipts, Permits, 1913–1947, box 10, YWCA, IWA; Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA*, 166.

107. “Branch YWCA Ends in Des Moines; Program Integrates with Central; Building Sold,” *Iowa Bystander*, 7/11/1946; Coskery Fund Committee Minutes, 11/30/1946, YWCA Branches and Clubs, Blue Triangle Branch, Coskery Fund Committee, box 20, YWCA, IWA; Lucchini to Smith, 9/29/1947, YWCA-Des Moines Administrative Records, General Correspondence, 1908, box 2, YWCA, IWA; Marie Ross, “Personal Touch,” *Iowa Bystander*, 9/14/1949, Publicity

and school-sponsored diversity conferences emerged. For adults, women's dining clubs and co-ed coffee clutches carried on the tradition of caffeine-fueled discussions about social ills in Polk County.¹⁰⁸

Nationally, black members still failed to see themselves represented at the highest levels of their own associations. In a 1949 policy study, the YWCA acknowledged that it had yet to employ a single black executive director. Citing retention issues, qualifications, and recruiting woes, black national board member Constance Ridley Heslip of Toledo, Ohio, argued that the issue had nothing to do with "ability and stick-to-it-iveness on their part"; rather, black women often held "doubts of the attitude of the majority group." Such attitudes were also reflected in a decline in educational and recreational programming for black girls and women between 1945 and 1947.¹⁰⁹

Although some white women did approach integration with a zero-sum game mentality, black women did not swarm into every event, association, or club. Unclear invitations, exclusive luncheons, and off-site events did not make for effective inclusion. Before the merger in Des Moines, one third of the 359 new and renewal memberships were from the branch. After the merger, black membership slid to 20 percent. Perhaps a matter of branch location, it is also possible that black girls' families were not immediately open to allowing their daughters to "play together, and share experiences at the YWCA with girls of other

Scrapbook, 1948-1949, box 28, YWCA, IWA; "Some Signs That Blinkered 'Welcome' at State Fair Did Not Mean Negro Guests," *Iowa Bystander*, 8/29/1946. The building was sold to Pauline Humphrey for \$7,000. She planned to use it to operate her Crescent School of Beauty Culture. Humphrey was the first African American woman in Iowa certified to teach, own, and operate a cosmetology school. For more on Pauline Humphrey, see Barbara James, interview and related materials in *Giving Voice to their Memories: Oral Histories*, IWA.

108. "Find Prejudice Personal Issue," *Des Moines Register*, 10/27/1949; "High School Students at Human Relations Institute," *Des Moines Register*, 10/24/1949, Publicity Scrapbook, 1948-1949, box 28, YWCA, IWA; Marie Ross, "Personal Touch," *Iowa Bystander*, 7/25/1946; "Romantic Atmosphere at the New Calico Club," *Des Moines Register*, 2/15/1947, Scrapbook, 1946-1947, box 27, YWCA, IWA.

109. YWCA of the USA, *Proceedings of the Seventeenth National Convention, 1946*, 86, 92, in Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA*, 167-68.

racess, creeds and colors." *Bystander* writer Marie Ross encouraged black readers to shuck their anxieties and send their daughters to the integrated camp in Boone, while Winn remarked that efforts to integrate served as "a test of white people's sincerity."¹¹⁰

AFTER THE MERGER, black women's voices become more difficult to discern in the preserved record. Yet it is clear that both black and white staff and volunteers shared a vision of Christian sisterhood and mission that required taking the needs and potential of girls and young women seriously. They had not always approached their work with such unity.

Leaders and members soon felt the postwar sting of housing and employment shortages. Des Moines staffers wrung their hands over their declining ability to protect their protégées. Much to the chagrin of the employees operating the rooms registry, "the crop of June graduates had [staff] tearing [their] hair out," taking pains to locate alternatives to "rooms in sections of the city that [were] notorious or very badly run down." Property managers' refusal to rent to single girls created an increased demand for services while staff turnover, volunteer slumps, and a shortage of younger women willing to "assume leadership" left the Des Moines YWCA barely able to function as more than a "drop-in center." The Book Lovers Club and the Public Affairs Committee still gathered in the Club Room, but political and educational programming took a back seat to large socials and one-time events.¹¹¹

110. Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA*, 167; "Clubs Opened to Two Races"; Report of the Executive Director to the Board of Directors, 2/19/1946, Annual Reports, 1938-1964, box 3, YWCA, IWA; Marie Ross, "Personal Touch," *Iowa Bystander*, 5/14/1948, Publicity Scrapbook, 1948-1949, box 28, YWCA, IWA; Report of Cordella A. Winn, July 1938, 10, Reports, Secretaries', Winn, YWCA of the USA National Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, in Verbrugge, "Recreation and Racial Politics in the YWCA," 104.

111. "Finding a Home, A Story," April 1946, Program Stories 1946-1947, box 5, YWCA, IWA; "Job Problems of Women Told," *Des Moines Tribune*, 2/11/1949, box 28, Publicity Scrapbook, 1948-49, YWCA, IWA; Marie Ross, "Personal Touch," *Iowa Bystander*, 9/14/1949; Marie Ross, "Personal Touch," *Iowa Bystander*, 6/18/1946; Katherine Lucchini to Norma Simms, 4/16/1947, Administrative Records, Histories, 1896, 1940-1995, box 1, YWCA, IWA; Lucchini to Myra Smith, 9/29/1947.

The institutional support offered by the YWCA provided an arena from which black middle-class reformers and community leaders could meet the needs of their own community while dismantling stereotypes held by their white counterparts. Both the separatist branch and the integrated association provided a way for black women and girls to acquire visibility and influence in their organizations and communities while honing the skills that allowed them to begin to transform “their world into their ideal of it.”¹¹²

112. Executive Committee Minutes, 2/11/1947.

Book Reviews and Notices

The Iowa State Constitution, 2nd ed., by Todd E. Pettys. The Oxford Commentaries on the State Constitutions of the United States. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. xv, 337 pp. Notes, bibliographical essay, table of cases, index. \$165 hardcover.

Reviewer John Dinan is professor of politics and international affairs at Wake Forest University. He is the author of *State Constitutional Politics: Governing by Amendment in the American States* (2018) and *The American State Constitutional Tradition* (2006).

In *The Iowa State Constitution*, Todd E. Pettys, a law professor at the University of Iowa College of Law, analyzes the origins, amendments, and judicial interpretations of the Iowa Constitution. Pettys's book is published as part of a 50-state series, *The Oxford Commentaries on the State Constitutions of the United States*, edited by G. Alan Tarr. Following the standard format for authors in this series, Pettys provides a history of Iowa's constitutions in the opening fifth of the book and a section-by-section commentary for each constitutional article and provision in the rest of the book.

Pettys provides a detailed account of the constitutional conventions that were held in 1844 and 1846 and eventually produced the state's inaugural constitution as well as an 1857 convention responsible for crafting the state's current constitution. Those conventions faced questions about how to structure and limit governing institutions, where to locate the capital, and how to draw the state's boundaries. Delegates also spent a good deal of time debating whether to allow banks to operate in the state. The 1846 state constitution was one of several state constitutions around the country at that time that prohibited the operation of banking institutions altogether. A decade later, though, public dissatisfaction with the bank ban played a key role in the calling of an 1857 convention that reversed course and authorized banks but sought to limit them in various ways and required any banking legislation to be approved in a public referendum.

Delegates at these conventions also debated various constitutional provisions with implications for African Americans. The 1846 convention approved provisions barring blacks from voting or serving in the legislature or militia. The 1857 convention considered various proposals to guarantee property rights for black residents, allow them to serve in

the militia, and permit them to testify as witnesses, before ultimately rejecting the first two proposals and passing a modified version of the third. Delegates at the 1857 convention also engaged in extensive debate about black suffrage and whether to replace a provision in the inaugural constitution that reserved voting for white men. Black suffrage commanded enough support in the convention that the decision was made to submit the question to the people in a separate vote alongside of the proposed new constitution; voters defeated the stand-alone measure by an overwhelming margin.

Although Iowa continues to operate under its 1857 constitution, the legislature has approved and voters have ratified more than 50 amendments. For instance, a 1962 amendment brought significant changes in the way judges are chosen. Although the 1857 constitution provided for judicial elections, in keeping with the dominant trend in state constitution-making during the mid-nineteenth century, just over a century later voters approved an amendment providing for judges to be appointed by the governor from nominees submitted by a merit-selection commission and then for judges to stand for periodic retention elections. A 1968 amendment instituted municipal home rule. Amendments in 1972 brought several notable changes by repealing a longstanding ban on lotteries and increasing the governor's term from two to four years. Among other amendments of note, voters defeated state equal rights amendments in 1980 and 1992 before finally approving a modified version of a gender-equity amendment in 1998.

In keeping with the format of the series, Pettys's section-by-section commentary focuses to a significant extent on judicial decisions interpreting each provision of the Iowa Constitution. Iowa courts have frequently been called on to interpret state constitutional provisions that have no counterpart in the U.S. Constitution. Occasionally, Iowa judges have concluded that provisions in the Iowa Constitution should be understood as guaranteeing greater protection for certain rights than is provided by U.S. Supreme Court interpretations of the federal Bill of Rights. The most notable decision of this kind was the Iowa Supreme Court's unanimous ruling in *Varnum v. Brien* (2009) that relied on the equal-protection clause of the Iowa Constitution to require legal recognition of same-sex marriage at a time when same-sex marriage was recognized in only two other states and six years before the U.S. Supreme Court interpreted the U.S. Constitution as requiring nationwide legalization of same-sex marriage.

This book will be a terrific resource for lawyers interested in tracing the origin, development, and interpretation of each of Iowa's constitutional provisions, but it deserves a broader readership from scholars

and citizens who are interested in tracing Iowa's political and legal development. Historians will benefit in particular from the close attention to debates and proceedings in Iowa's three mid-nineteenth-century conventions. Students of Iowa government and politics will also come away from this carefully researched and well-written book with answers to numerous questions about the origins of institutions, rules, and processes that play a key role in how Iowa is governed.

Wisconsin and the Shaping of American Law, by Joseph A. Ranney. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2017. x, 309 pp. Graphs, notes, bibliography, index. \$49.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Dale Yurs earned an M.A. in history at the University of Northern Iowa in 2011. His master's thesis was "From a Weak Tribunal to a Branch of Government: The Supreme Court of the United States from 1789 to Marshall."

Joseph Ranney's book, *Wisconsin and the Shaping of American Law*, offers a new look at how state law made a valuable contribution to our national legal system. Through his chronological look at Wisconsin's legal history, Ranney puts the midwestern states on the forefront of legal history and shows how those states, particularly Wisconsin, created the system of laws that we enjoy today.

The book opens with a discussion of how the newly created nation built a legal system to span its entire territory. After winning independence from the British in 1783, the United States gained large amounts of land west of the Appalachian Mountains. The question became how to maintain law and order in the new territory. The civil law systems of the French and Spanish, who occupied the territory prior to the French and Indian War, ran a rather loose ship. Distance limited those colonial powers' ability to micromanage their colonies. Therefore, Ranney argues, those in positions of authority required only a rudimentary knowledge of the law. Once the territory came under British control, the French and Spanish civil law systems became obsolete and a new legal system had to be fashioned. Responding to this need after independence, the new American government created the Northwest Ordinance. The progressive nature of the ordinance, exemplified in its bill of rights and the prohibition of slavery, created a new legal culture in the Midwest, one that the national legal system later adopted.

Ranney further shows how the Midwest's progressive nature developed throughout the Jacksonian period. He explains how the midwestern states embraced the premises of Jacksonian jurisprudence, especially expanding rights and opportunities. The ideals of the Jack-

sonian era influenced Wisconsin's constitution-writing process. The initial document the convention produced showcased broad social and political rights, including suffrage, homestead exemptions, and women's rights. Ranney supports his claim that the Midwest led the march toward equal rights, even though the convention did not ratify all of those rights at once.

The Midwest, and Wisconsin in particular, continued this march. Wisconsin made the bold move to challenge the federal Congress's authority by declaring the Fugitive Slave Act unconstitutional. After the abolition of slavery, Wisconsin enforced antisegregation laws. Throughout the Progressive Era, the Midwest produced leaders like Robert M. LaFollette, who led the Progressive movement.

Ranney also shows how conservative as well as liberal ideas display the midwestern influence on national legal culture. Wisconsin falls on the conservative side of the issue of school vouchers, but remains on the forefront of shaping legal history. Through his many examples throughout the book, Ranney illustrates that the politics of the issue matters less than the idea of individual freedom.

Ranney has made a valuable contribution to the historiography of American legal history. Throughout the book, he uses sound logic and strongly supports his claims. His research brings to light many state laws and cases that lift the ideas discussed in the book out of obscurity. Readers will come away with a new appreciation for state legal systems and their history. Historians usually show how legal trends stem from the U.S. Supreme Court and the federal Congress; Ranney flips this notion and shows how states, particularly those in the Midwest, have pushed legal trends.

I recommend this book to anyone who enjoys legal or state history. Ranney points to a variety of interesting cases and laws that stimulate thinking and offer a fresh look at legal trends. The book also stimulates pride in the Midwest. Normally we think of the coasts as driving trends, but here we see the Midwest at the forefront and having a lasting impact on the entire nation.

The Great Medicine Road: Narratives of the Oregon, California, and Mormon Trails, Part 3, 1850–1855, edited by Michael L. Tate. American Trails Series 24. Norman, OK: Arthur H. Clark Co., an imprint of the University of Oklahoma Press, 2017. 312 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$45.00 hardcover.

Reviewer J. T. Murphy is professor of history at Indiana University South Bend. His research and writing have focused on frontier settlement, the

Oregon Trail, and the military history of the nineteenth-century U.S. West, among other topics.

"The long looked for day arrived and a great many of our friends came to see us and help us yoke our oxen," 20-year-old John Lawrence Johnson noted in his diary on April 1, 1851. "There was much weeping at leave taking. I looked out and saw our friends from town passing, so with whip in hand I started" (70). Johnson's father, the Reverend Neill Johnson, had been asked to establish a Presbyterian church in Oregon's Willamette River valley, so the family of 12 gathered their belongings into three wagons and left Mount Pleasant, Iowa, for the journey west. As the younger Johnson walked past their locust tree, he put some seed pods into his pocket and planted them six months later at their new home. On the same day in 1852, Mary Jane Long's family crossed the Missouri River at Council Bluffs, vacating their Iowa farm to resettle in Oregon. They were among an estimated 70,000 migrants, the largest number that traveled on the overland trails.

Between 1850 and 1855, the period covered in this third of a four-volume series edited by Michael L. Tate (assisted by Kerin Tate, Will Bagley, and Richard Rieck), the increased traffic on the trail seemed endless to Indian observers. They soon called it the Great Medicine Road, and the letters, diaries, and reminiscences in this edition attest to that impression. In mid-May 1853 John H. B. Neill reported that 2,000 wagons were already ahead of their train, and on June 1 of that same year, Helen Marnie Stewart recorded in her diary, "We can see emigrants now as far as we can see" (180). As a consequence, crowded conditions made finding grass and firewood difficult, but well-worn trails were easy to follow, numerous cutoffs had been established, ferries and bridges aided river crossings, and a military presence offered some protection. But along with the daily tedium, emigrants continued to experience risk. Cholera took its toll in 1852 and again in 1855, leaving many graves in its wake. "We had to make a rough box from planks taken out of the wagons," remembered Long following the death of her uncle, "and we wrapped his body in bed clothes and buried him" (151). Within days, two of his children died as well. During the early trail years, Indians were rarely a threat, although emigrants imagined otherwise, but by 1855 natives along the road, particularly the Lakota, resented the trespassers and demanded tribute. The accounts here describe a range of negotiations and confrontations with Indians; in the telling, pioneers reminded themselves (and their readers) of what an adventure it was.

Once again, the editors have provided documents that will aid researchers and delight anyone interested in the lives of overland pioneers. This volume includes four detailed maps showing the many trails

and cutoffs, photographs and illustrations, a lengthy bibliography, and explanatory introductions and footnotes. It is an impressive effort and, like the earlier volumes produced in this series, an important addition to trail studies.

Jews on the Frontier: Religion and Mobility in Nineteenth-Century America, by Shari Rabin. North American Religions Series. New York: New York University Press, 2017. viii, 193 pp. Notes, index. \$37.00 hardcover.

Reviewer Hasia R. Diner is professor of history and of Hebrew and Judaic Studies at New York University (NYU), and she directs NYU's Center for American Jewish History. Her books include *The Jews of the United States, 1654 to 2000* (2006) and *Her Works Praise Her: A History of Jewish Women in America from Colonial Times to the Present* (2002).

In this compact but geographically far-ranging book Shari Rabin set out to accomplish three scholarly ends, all of which expand understanding of American and American Jewish history. *Jews on the Frontier*, a straightforward title, looks at the experiences of the Jews who immigrated to the United States in the nineteenth century, during the decades flanking the Civil War, and who spread out beyond the Appalachian Mountains, crossed the Mississippi River, and penetrated in all directions, going to nearly every state and territory in the lands that opened up for the United States during its continental conquest. Most arrived as young men who took up the occupation of on-the-road peddlers and then graduated from peddling to entrepreneurship. Most did reasonably well economically, while a few succeeded spectacularly. As white men, they encountered no legal obstacles as they scouted out the most attractive places for business in this vast terrain.

Rabin's goals grew out of this historical reality about Jewish migration and mobility. In the places they went, they found no laws limiting them and no pre-existing Jewish institutional infrastructure. They came to these places as the first Jews, and whatever they might want of a Jewish life they had to do for themselves.

As a book of religious history, *Jews on the Frontier* considers religion not as a normative matter. Rather it places it in the realm of lived experience. Religion, Rabin shows as she charts physical movement and its impact on European immigrant Jews in the five decades from the 1820s to the 1870s, functioned as something they lived with. They did so by choice and not because they had to. How they engaged with religion did not rest exclusively with the dictates of rabbis or with the inherited laws of the past. Not that clergy did not show up on the frontier or that

Jews did not build synagogues there. Those, however, came later. Instead, their religious lives reflected the needs and sensibilities of quite ordinary Jews, who performed their Jewishness as they felt they had to and as they wanted. The decisions these Jews made about the nature of their religious lives ought to be seen as creative, improvisational, and at times inconsistent, reflecting the immigrating Jews' freedom of movement in pursuit of economic opportunity.

Rabin hoped with this book to show how those decisions represented much more than a project to imitate the forms and styles of the dominant Protestant culture. Many previous historians have asserted that Jewish immigrants to America, particularly those who came from Central Europe during the nineteenth century and who ventured out beyond New York, substituted the trappings of Protestantism for Jewish authenticity. Rabin shows convincingly, instead, that the choices made by the Jews who found themselves in the thousands of small towns sprinkled across the American frontier thought long and hard about how to be Jewish in these seemingly unlikely places. As they settled down, they, as they could, founded organizations, hired rabbis and teachers, dispensed charity, sought out the services of kosher slaughterers, and considered it imperative to raise their children as Jews. They did not fret over every jot and tittle of Jewish law, of *halachah*, but neither did they purposefully set out to become just like the Protestants around them. As these Jews acted—and this book puts action well above ideology—they did so with little guidance from authoritative sources or religious leaders. Their actions grew from the ground up, bearing witness to the imperatives of frontier small-town life.

Rabin's book takes the nineteenth century seriously. Most American Jewish historians have dismissed it and the Jews who emigrated from the German-speaking lands as less interesting and, frankly, as less Jewish, than the millions who left eastern Europe after the 1870s. So, too, historians have built the American Jewish narrative around the sights, sounds, and details of thickly populated Jewish neighborhoods, particularly of New York's Lower East Side or Chicago's Maxwell Street. Rabin makes a compelling case here that the full arc of American Jewish history cannot ignore the young Jewish men who pursued their livelihoods by heading for the frontier. Their religious inconsistencies, creativities, and sense of empowerment as ordinary Jews may actually serve as a better template for thinking about how Judaism developed in America, even after the passing of the frontier era.

Lincoln's Sense of Humor, by Richard Carwardine. Concise Lincoln Library. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2017. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. 171 pp. \$24.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Mark Wahlgren Summers is professor of history at the University of Kentucky. He has written several books about politics during the Civil War, Reconstruction, and the Gilded Age.

What, another book about Lincoln's jokes? jaded critics may carp. With the same publisher having issued a volume on the same subject just three years ago, never did the words, "Stop me if you've heard this one," seem fitter. In fact, with oft-addressed subjects, like twice-told tales, everything depends on how a person tells it. Richard Carwardine's book not only tells it shrewdly but with fresh insight; amazed readers will realize that they *haven't* heard this one—not to mention some Lincoln stories definitely not clean enough for a PG-13 rating.

Carwardine's subject, Lincoln's sense of humor, takes in more than the jests he let loose; it covers what tickled his funnybone and how his appreciation of a good laugh both revealed his character and shaped his response to the world. Carwardine reminds us, as other scholars have, that Lincoln's sense of humor softened his sorrows. In office, it let him deflect, distract, and deflate pests who laid demands on him that he had no wish to oblige. Carl Sandburg could have told us that much. Where Carwardine excels is in examining how Lincoln's comic style refined over time. Satire mean enough to reduce one rival to "blubbling" gave way to a gentler needling, where mockery of himself and a fund of anecdotes kept what victims there were from taking personal offense. As the slavery issue became dominant, the jokester of the Illinois courthouse and back room learned subtler ways of applying humor that made it a far more dangerous weapon than before—and learned when to shy clear of it entirely.

Lincoln's sense of humor also proved a tool of infinite variety, from Joe Miller's joke-book chestnuts to wordplay, puns, absurdities, irony, tall tales, logic run amok, and misapplied biblical quotations, and nobody laughed harder at his own knee-slappers than Lincoln himself. But even his story of the crows so terrified of a scarecrow that they brought back the corn they had taken two years back had a point, not just a punch line. That was why Lincoln admired the outbursts of David Ross Locke's Copperhead bounder, "Petroleum V. Nasby," expressing in preposterous, grammatically challenged form the bigotry and hypocrisy of so many white northerners.

Looking back, Americans cherish Lincoln's humor, even the puns so awful that they rank as wartime atrocities. In fact, all too many of the president's contemporaries felt easier about electing a rail-splitter than

a side-splitter. In a time of savage war, critics saw Lincoln's most humanizing trait as his most inhumane: for them, nothing so ill-befit a front line as a punch line, especially a smutty one. If funning was a personal asset for the "Widow-Maker of the nineteenth century," as one Democratic paper called him, it was a political liability.

Nobody will regret reading this book for the jokes alone; they glint on every page. Unlike Lincoln himself, not all of them belong to the ages. But it is no small recommendation in a history monograph to predict that somewhere, every reader will give a yelp of appreciative laughter.

"This Infernal War": The Civil War Letters of William and Jane Standard, edited by Timothy Mason Roberts. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2018. xi, 359 pp. Illustrations, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95 hardcover.

Reviewer J. L. Anderson is associate professor of history at Mount Royal University. He is the author of "The Vacant Chair on the Farm: Soldier Husbands, Farm Wives, and the Iowa Home Front, 1861-1865" (*Annals of Iowa*, 2007) and coeditor of *Union Heartland: The Midwestern Home Front during the Civil War* (2013).

Between September 1862 and June 1865, William and Jane Standard exchanged more than 200 letters. While William served as an officer in the 103rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry, Jane managed the household and family property, cared for three children, and took in boarders. Their letters are filled with news of neighbors, family, battles, casualties, farming, politics, and the changing material conditions of life on the home front and in the war's Western Theater. William and Jane vehemently opposed the war, regularly condemning Lincoln, emancipation, the Republican Party, and Republican neighbors and family members whose lives intersected with theirs.

Readers will see the myriad problems married couples faced when husbands departed. Jane was surprised on several occasions by the appearance of creditors who sought payment for debts that she did not know they owed. On another occasion, Jane recovered the family's stolen wagon. She bought and sold livestock, hay, and fodder, butchered hogs, and paid taxes and creditors. Ultimately, Jane collected relief money from the county, allowing her to pay property taxes and remain at home.

As much as William hated confiscation and emancipation, he was an active participant in the evolution of hard war. He was an expert forager, "cramping" pork, turkeys, chickens, horses, and other items. His sympathies were clearly on the side of white southerners, and he made frequent disparaging remarks about enslaved African Americans and freedmen. But he also recognized that white southerners were divided

by the war. In early 1863 he made a telling comment regarding the difficulty of serving in an army of occupation: "They said that they was good Union people but it is hard to tell who is for the Union down here" (53).

Among the most fascinating aspects of the Standards' correspondence are William's expressions of his hatred of the army and the correspondence about leaving it. In 1863 William discussed surrendering to guerrillas in Tennessee rather than to regular Confederate forces. The guerrillas, so their story went, paroled their prisoners and allowed parolees to go home. William eventually recognized the improbability of that plan, but that did not stop him from planning his separation. Later that year, both William and Jane made cryptic comments about some "experiment" by which William would leave the army. Jane later replied that she was glad William "made up your mind not to desert" (158). Around that time, they made several comments about moving to California, which may have been part of the plan for desertion. Soon after, however, William contented himself with applying for a discharge (for which he was rejected) and pledging to do his duty. After participating in the Grand Review in May 1865, William praised the generals on the reviewing stand as "the greatest in the world" and affirmed his sense of accomplishment in serving the Union cause. "I will tell you," he wrote, "it makes me feel proud to see so many nice faces, and so many fine little girls and boys, greeting the sunburnt soldier welcome back to his home" (261).

Anyone interested in the Iowa wartime experience will learn a great deal from *This Infernal War*. Although the Standards were from Illinois (via Tennessee on Jane's side), it is not difficult to imagine that their attitudes paralleled those of numerous Iowa couples. Furthermore, the struggles they endured were commonplace across the western states, regardless of political affiliation. My only criticism of the book is that the publisher used a miniscule font size for the epilogue, making it difficult to read. That is a comparatively minor detraction, however, from what is a well-edited, thoroughly annotated, and remarkable collection of letters.

Scandinavians in the State House: How Nordic Immigrants Shaped Minnesota Politics, by Klas Bergman. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2017. 304 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$19.95 paperback.

Reviewer Anna M. Peterson is assistant professor of history at Luther College. Her research and writing have focused on Norwegian American immigrant women during the Progressive Era.

During the period of mass immigration, millions of Danes, Swedes, Norwegians, Finns, and Icelanders made homes for themselves in the state of Minnesota. Like other immigrant groups, these immigrants had a lasting impact on the history of the United States. In this book, Klas Bergman argues that Nordic immigrants have had a particularly strong political influence in American politics in general, but in Minnesota politics in particular. Bergman sets out to trace this influence over time and to demonstrate that Nordic immigrants shaped Minnesota's political culture in ways that are still evident today.

This main argument is largely organized chronologically, tracing Nordic immigrants' active participation in Minnesota politics from the "four pioneers" of Minnesota politics in the 1880s—Norwegian Knute Nelson and Swedes John Lind, John A. Johnson, and Adolph Olson Eberhart—to the lingering Scandinavian flavor of Minnesota politics non-Scandinavian politicians still operate within today. Bergman does an excellent job of balancing the biographies and contributions of Minnesota "greats" such as Charles A. Lindbergh Sr., Hubert Humphrey, and Walter Mondale with the actions of ordinary men and women living in places like rural Otter Tail County and the Iron Range. In doing so, Bergman illustrates how Nordic immigrants shaped Minnesota politics at the local, state, and national level. They were governors, U.S. senators, and vice presidents as well as union organizers, Nonpartisan League recruiters, temperance champions, and woman suffrage activists. It is the sum of these actions that left such an enduring mark on Minnesota politics.

Bergman is careful to show how politicians invoked, adapted, and abandoned their Nordic pasts at different points in history. His work reveals the process through which ethnic identities factored into political identities. First-generation immigrant politicians in the 1880s, as well as politicians today, had to balance Scandinavian and American identities to suit their audiences and political needs. Although Bergman is right to emphasize that the ethnic identification of Scandinavian politicians waned after World War I, by telling the story up until the present day, he is able to show the continued utility of a Nordic identity in Minnesota politics. The quote he includes from Minnesota House Representative Paul Thissen, a member of the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party (DFL), demonstrates this nicely: "I don't think of myself as a Scandinavian politician, although in some sense I guess I do because it allows me to connect with people in a particular way. It's still an asset in Minnesota to be of Norwegian or Scandinavian descent" (189).

This book promises to appeal to a diverse audience. Although Bergman's focus is on Minnesota politics, he does engage in discussions of Scandinavians' influence on national politics and includes cases from

nearby states, North Dakota in particular. His findings offer a fruitful basis from which other scholars can draw comparisons between the Scandinavian influence on Minnesota politics and other states with large Scandinavian American populations, such as Iowa.

Bergman's background as a journalist and author is evident in his accessible and engaging writing style. The book is written for a broad audience, but scholars will also be interested in Bergman's findings. His arguments are based on extensive research, including an impressive number of interviews. One of the major drawbacks of the book is the way the references have been relegated to the back of the book. The "Notes" section provides citations for the sources used in the text but is relegated to the back of the book, and individual notes do not correspond to a number or symbol in the text itself; one must hunt to find where exactly the quoted material and contextual analysis come from.

That flaw aside, *Scandinavians in the State House* is an excellent resource for anyone interested in regional politics in general and immigrant engagement in and influence on U.S. politics specifically. Bergman draws thought-provoking parallels between the historic development of Scandinavian settlement and active participation in politics with Minnesota's newest population of immigrants from Somalia. These arguments, along with the many others he presents throughout the book, promise to stimulate much discussion of the legacy of Scandinavian influence on Minnesota politics and the ways immigrants can shape the nature and character of a state's political identity.

Out Where the West Begins, volume 2, *Creating and Civilizing the American West*, by Philip F. Anschutz. Denver: Cloud Camp Press; distributed by University of Oklahoma Press, 2017. 392 pp. Illustrations, timeline, bibliography, index. \$34.95 hardcover.

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

In volume one of *Out Where the West Begins*, Philip F. Anschutz, a Denver-based corporate executive, celebrated past economic success in the American West by profiling 49 men whose success seemed to herald his own. For his follow-up, subtitled *Creating and Civilizing the American West*, he focuses on 100 men and 8 women who "stand out for their achievements in western policymaking, exploration, innovation, military defense, conservation, image making, opinion shaping, and social reform" (13). It is an idiosyncratic list that includes Thomas Jefferson

and Thomas Moran, John James Audubon and Jeanette Rankin, a list intended to underscore Anschutz's view of the West as a special place shaped by special people who could "turn their dreams into reality" (13). He concentrates on anyone reinforcing his belief in Manifest Destiny or whose ideas and innovations aided western development (and in what seems a stretch, this includes Thomas Edison and Iowa-educated George Washington Carver). Most are well known, even legendary, and he has nothing new to tell us, but in the telling, Anschutz displays his love of the West, with its romance and beauty, and his appreciation of a Turnerian narrative that links the central characteristics of being an American—individualism, self-reliance, and democratic values—with the advance of the frontier. "The settlement of the American West," he argues, "instituted a pattern, still in evidence today, of an entrepreneurial, intellectually curious, highly mobile, and transactional population" (14).

In the first of five categories, "Western Leaders and Policymakers," Anschutz begins with Jefferson, whose "vision of the West, his force of personality, and his political strategy laid the groundwork for all that followed" (34). And what followed was territorial acquisition, whether through negotiation or war, and Anschutz praises the political figures, such as James K. Polk, and the military men, like Philip H. Sheridan, who made it possible. He also credits the federal government, particularly Abraham Lincoln's signing of the Homestead Act, Morrill Act, and Pacific Railway Act, all in 1862, with "spurring settlement and economic development and setting the stage for the region's absorption into the nation as a whole" (81). In the arid West, each layer of government assumed responsibility for making water accessible, and the key figures, in Anschutz's view—Francis G. Newlands, Delph Carpenter, and William Mulholland—"represented different aspects of the transformation of western rivers into a vast hydrological machine" (123). But if Anschutz measures American progress with western settlement, what can he say about the fate of native peoples? In business terms, they were simply at "a competitive disadvantage" (93) and, as the Lakota leader Red Cloud and Ute leader Ouray came to realize, "the numbers and technological might of the Americans" (99) could never be overcome. Despite his embrace of conquest and triumphalism, Anschutz admires Indian resistance and concludes that "their continued cultural, political, and economic strength is integral to the development of the twenty-first century West" (103).

Anschutz's admiration for historian Frederick Jackson Turner's "frontier thesis," first articulated in 1893, is unmistakable. He is correct to recognize Turner's long-lasting influence, particularly in how Americans perceive the West in popular culture, but professional historians

have questioned, even repudiated, most elements of the “thesis.” Turner’s “safety valve,” associated here with Horace Greeley, suggested that “the pressures of unemployment and poverty building up in eastern cities” would be released once people migrated westward (195). But relocating can be prohibitive for poor people, a point Anschutz makes in his discussion of Benjamin “Pap” Singleton’s work to move black families to Kansas after the Civil War. To his credit, and unlike Turner, Anschutz includes women and people of color in describing individual success in the West. As he measures achievement, he considers not only what people gained by going west, but also what they contributed to the region. Father Junípero Serra established Franciscan missions in California that “underpinned European and American civilization in the West” (131); Abigail Scott Duniway traveled the Oregon Trail in 1852 to become an important voice for woman suffrage; and architect Mary Colter popularized the Pueblo Revival style of architecture. Anschutz’s affection for the West extends to his extensive art collection, the basis for Denver’s American Museum of Western Art, and he interlaces the book with examples. Not surprisingly, then, his discussions of George Catlin, Frederick Remington, and other well-known painters are quite good.

As in his first book, Anschutz often draws simplistic conclusions and is prone to overstatement, but his idea of what the West represents is embedded in American life. It is an image many readers probably share.

Farming across Borders: A Transnational History of the North American West, edited by Sterling Evans. Connecting the Greater West Series. College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2017. xxv, 460 pp. Maps, illustrations, tables, notes, bibliography, index. \$65.00 hardcover.

Reviewer R. Douglas Hurt is head of the Department of History at Purdue University. He is the author of many works, especially about the history of agriculture, the Great Plains, and the West, most recently *Food and Agriculture during the Civil War* (2016).

Historians have given considerable attention to specific areas of western agricultural history, particularly migrant labor, cattle ranching, and water. Scholarship dating to the 1930s has also focused on commodities. In this sense, *Farming across Borders* does not, despite the editor’s claim, break new ground for historical inquiry. It does, however, provide an important integration of selected subjects, the scholarship and story of which crosses international boundaries with Canada and Mexico. This context expands our knowledge of well-covered subjects, and, in most cases, the essays contribute new knowledge about farming in the North American West.

Sterling Evans has compiled a collection of 19 essays arranged in six parts. The essays are nearly equally apportioned to emphasize Canadian, Mexican, and American topics with as much cross-border integration and detail as the authors considered possible. Evans recognizes that political boundaries, in contrast to geography and the environment, often do not determine history. Political boundaries do matter, however, when historians consider issues of national importance such as settlement, land policy, and government regulations of farming activities. In this collection Evans has arranged the essays in sections titled (1) Agricultural Connections across North America, (2) Commodity Histories in the Borderlands, (3) A Sense of Place for Ranching and Farming in the North American Borderlands, (4) Agricultural Labor in the US-Mexico Borderlands, (5) Agricultural Labor in the US-Canada Borderlands, and (6) Agriculture and Transborder Water Issues.

No collection of essays can cover everything. A publisher's space limitations often limit what an author or editor can do, although critics often do not understand this. With this book, however, the Texas A&M University Press has been generous. The result is an important collection of essays, many of which are significant and create new knowledge; most are useful. Evans provides a helpful, brief introduction to each section, after which readers can find essays on grain production, cattle raising, flax, colonization, chili peppers, ranching, the tomato industry, braceros, hops, farm organizations, custom cutting, irrigation, and labor for pecan shelling, cotton picking, and sugar beet production. The authors attempted to provide comparative essays at least for U.S.-Canadian and U.S.-Mexican transnational relationships, but balanced comparatives evidently proved difficult. Alicia Dewey's excellent essay, "Ranching across Borders: The Making of a Transnational Cattle Industry in the Texas-Mexico Borderlands, 1749-1945," for example, is not matched with a similar or comparative essay dealing with the cattle ranching industry in the northern Great Plains or Canadian prairies. Yet an extensive literature exists that could have contributed to an essay providing the more balanced transnational inclusion that Evans sought. Transnational approaches also can omit significant national developments that cross borders, such as the matter of groundwater rights in the Great Plains, a topic that is not adequately addressed here but that is enormously important for agriculture in the region, including the U.S.-Mexican borderlands.

Five of the essays have been previously published. Almost all discuss western topics. Only a few essays deal with agriculture in the Midwest. These include Kristin Hoganson's "Meat in the Middle: Converging Borderlands in the US Midwest, 1865-1900," Joshua D.

MacFadyen's "Flax on the Northern Great Plains and Prairies, 1889–1930," Tisa M. Anders and Rosa Elia Cobos's "The *Beatabeleras* of Western Nebraska: Gender Labor, and the Beet Sugar Industry," Jason McCollom's, "'We Are Tied Together . . . in a Hundred Different Ways': Farmers and Farm Organizations across the Forty-Ninth Parallel, 1905–1915," Thomas D. Isern and Suzanne Kelley's "'Done for Another Year': The Resilience of Canadian Custom Harvesters on the North American Plains," along with a passing nod to the region in Sterling Evans's "Dependent Harvests: Grain Production on the American and Canadian Plains and the Double Dependency with Mexico, 1880–1950." The authors of the previously published essays apparently did not have the opportunity to update their secondary sources.

Overall, Evans has provided a useful collection of essays that deal with the agricultural history of the North American West in a transnational context. Scholars will find it a ready reference and a good introduction to specific topics. Most of the essays are synthesized based on secondary sources. Evans's call for primary research is justified for this expansive, new approach to the agricultural history of the North American West. Anyone interested in this field of historical inquiry will find Evans's essay collection a useful read and an important guide for future research.

The Perfect Fence: Untangling the Meanings of Barbed Wire, by Lyn Ellen Bennett and Scott Abbott. Connecting the Great West Series. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2017. xxiv, 269 pp. Illustrations, graph, notes, bibliography, index. \$42.00 hardcover.

Reviewer Wayne Franklin is professor of English, American Studies, and Environmental Studies at the University of Connecticut, Storrs. In addition to publishing several books on James Fenimore Cooper, he is the author of *A Rural Carpenter's World: The Craft in a Nineteenth-Century New York Township* (1990).

At the start of the 1962 film *Lonely Are the Brave*, modern cowboy Jack Burns encounters a barbed wire fence while riding his horse, Whiskey, across the New Mexico landscape. Dismounting, Burns (played by Kirk Douglas) snips the wire, opening the closed range and allowing him to proceed. The film, directed by David Miller from a script written by the once blacklisted Dalton Trumbo, was based on the second novel (*The Lonely Cowboy*, 1957) by a rising star of western literature, Edward Abbey. Here is how Abbey himself set up the fence-cutting episode: "[Burns] came eventually to a barbed-wire fence, gleaming new wire stretched with vibrant tautness between steel stakes driven into the

sand and rock, reinforced between stakes with wire staves. The man looked for a gate but could see only the fence itself extended north and south to a pair of vanishing points, an unbroken thin stiff line of geometric exactitude scored with a bizarre, mechanical precision over the face of the rolling earth." This fence is no ordinary obstacle. In a story that will end with the displaced cowboy run down on a rainy highway by a truck laden with toilet fixtures, the fence represents both the insistent demarcations of a modern, bounded world and the near ubiquity of industrial products that promise convenience but are capable of delivering confinement and at last death.

The Perfect Fence is a smart study of the tangles of meaning caught in the barbed wire fence. Fences had long been a staple of rural landscapes in North America when the first weaponized wire fences came onto the market following the Civil War. Fences kept animals out of crops during open range periods in American history, then kept them in once most of the range was closed. The first fences tended to be improvised from uprooted stumps and lopped-off tree branches. Then they were built in various forms from posts and boards. In areas of abundant stone outcroppings, as along much of the East Coast, rocks brought to the surface by continuing tillage eventually provided a more durable substitute, resulting in the distinctive stone walls of New England, New York, and even the Kentucky Bluegrass. Once European settlement passed from the area of heavy forest and geological riches and onto the prairie, where neither extensive woodlands nor much surface rock appeared, erecting enclosures became a challenge.

Into the gap came, eventually, an array of alternatives. Some use was made of hedging plants, most notably the Osage Orange, of which remnant examples survive to this day in several midwestern areas. Woven wire fence was tried, first of iron and later steel, but proved ineffective with regard to larger animals, which could simply push through it. In the 1870s various inventors affixed to wire fencing an array of sharp pronged attachments intended to repel any stock that came in contact. Although these innovations had considerable effect, they also generated various kinds of concern. It is in regard to this particular subject that the work of Lyn Ellen Bennett and Scott Abbott is particularly valuable. Earlier scholars, including Earl W. Hayter and Henry and Frances McCallum chronicled various technical aspects of the story of barbed wire. Bennett and Abbott, after briefly treating that subject, pass on to a consideration of the rich and diverse cultural meanings of barbed wire fencing. Following the lead of other researchers, they reflect on the inherent violence of the invention, which, after all, uses bodily pain as a means, as one 1885 comment had it, of

keeping “the ‘ins’ from being ‘outs’” and “the ‘outs’ from being ‘ins.’” Because as early as the Spanish American War and the Second Boer War barbed wire was applied to the battlefield, the technology of pain as a deterrent to movement across boundaries soon became a subject of much reflection in a variety of practical and moral contexts. Worse applications of the agricultural invention to human or, rather, inhuman purposes followed in the twentieth century, from the trenches of World War I to the concentration camps of World War II.

The authors do a great job of illustrating the many strands of this story with appropriately chosen graphic materials and, in an especially fresh fifth chapter, modern American literary texts, including Abbey’s novel and the writings of Wyoming poet and prose writer and rancher James Galvin. This is, all in all, a nice example of how much we can learn from material culture studies undertaken in a spirit of genuine interdisciplinary inquiry.

Birth of the American Dream: Four Immigrant Families, Nine Generations, The Middle-Class Struggle, by Steven C. Hull. Yorba Linda, CA: Rock Bluff Press, 2017. xx, 428 pp. Appendixes, notes. \$14.99 paperback, \$5.99 Kindle edition.

Reviewer Bruce Curtis, a native of Wapello County, Iowa, is Professor Emeritus of Michigan State University. He is the author of *Like Ordinary People: An Illustrated Iowa Social Biography of Josephine Mae Teeter Curtis and Her Times, 1903–2007* (2008) and articles in the *Iowa History Journal* and *Our Iowa*.

There is gold here, for those who choose to dig, nuggets to be found. In the front matter of this self-published work, Steven C. Hull remarks, “I did not write an academic history. This book is a compilation of biography, history and memoir.” In explicating the book’s subtitle, Hull focuses on his English and Polish ancestors’ origins and how they made their way to America, ultimately to southeastern Iowa, some to Jefferson County, but particularly to Wapello County, more particularly to Ottumwa and vicinity.

As the subtitle suggests, Hull views his ancestors as having engaged for generations, whether in Europe or America, in a struggle to rise and cling to “middle class” status. Although the term is not defined, their struggle is presented as involving enduring and generally unsuccessful attempts to become landowners in an era of booming population growth, rising prices for increasingly limited land, and agricultural markets over which they had no control. In specific instances, as strapped tenant farmers, they turned to low-paying and insecure employment in the area’s new industries.

In attempting to create a historical framework for his ancestors' struggles, the author depends with limited success on secondary sources. The book is more compelling as biography and memoir, most effective — and affecting — when it is most personal and autobiographical. In the prologue, and occasionally elsewhere, Hull reminisces briefly about family life in and around Ottumwa, Wapello County, and south central Iowa; about his own early years; about his father, Charles Hull; and especially about his grandfathers, Paul Hull and Louis Freeman, both long-term employees of a major Ottumwa and Iowa industry, the John Morrell meatpacking plant.

"Grandpa" Paul Hull, the author writes, "always had a job at the John Morrell meatpacking plant . . . from the time he was seventeen, through the Depression, the acrimonious labor strikes, the growth pains of the union . . . until he retired at sixty-five" (xvii). Of Great-Grandmother Constantia Gluch Shelangouski, Hull tells "the story of a young Polish woman who left her village to travel alone to America to marry a man of forty with nine children she had never met" (xx). In the book's last chapter, we learn specifically about at least some family members' hard-earned rise to relative affluence following World War II. Readers may wish for more such detailed family memories.

The bulk of the book presents European and American history from secondary sources but so extensively that it tends to overwhelm or obscure the family story. Much of Ottumwa's history is, however, discussed usefully, including that of its early industries, particularly John Morrell's. There is no discussion of the town's other major industry, Dain/John Deere, perhaps because no family member worked there.

The text would have benefited from attention from a copy editor. Certain interpretations are inconsistent: The assertion that "in the frontier as well as in any predominately-rural area farmers held the ultimate economic power" (120) conflicts with a later claim that "global trade again affected the supposedly isolated farmers" (196). And there are errors: "As farm commodity prices dropped throughout the 1920s followed by the Depression, [Morrell] workers never pushed for another union" (402-3). Curiously, on the same page, Hull cites his major source for such matters, Wilson J. Warren's *Struggling with "Iowa's Pride,"* which shows Morrell workers reorganizing during the Depression (403). Later, Hull claims that "Teddy Roosevelt established the Federal Reserve System" (442); actually, Woodrow Wilson signed the Federal Reserve Act in 1913. "Scandinavia" seems to refer to or include Poland (243-44). Certain readers will note minor errors: From Burlington to Mt. Pleasant is not "at least fifty miles" (179) but thirty. Agency is not "about ten miles west of Fairfield" (279) but about twenty. Finally, the difficulty of following

Hull's family without distraction is exacerbated by erratic endnote form and by lack of index, bibliography, or, especially, family genealogies.

On the book's last page, Hull recalls his Grandpa Louis Freeman: "The day before he died, my wife and I brought our one-year-old son to meet his great-grandfather for the first time. I remember him waving good-bye to us out his apartment window and feeling sadness at his isolation with Grandma gone, no garden or fruit trees to tend, just waiting alone" (428). That is a nugget worth digging for.

Prairie Fires: The American Dreams of Laura Ingalls Wilder, by Caroline Fraser. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2017. xii, 625 pp. Illustrations, map, notes, index. \$35.00 hardcover.

Reviewer John J. Fry is professor of history at Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights, Illinois. He is the editor of *Almost Pioneers* (2013) and is writing a biography of Laura Ingalls Wilder with particular attention to her religious faith.

The Library of America published a two-volume edition of Laura Ingalls Wilder's eight Little House books in 2012. Caroline Fraser was the editor of that edition, and she has been writing about Wilder since the 1990s. *Prairie Fires* is the culmination of years of research and careful thought. It is by far the most complete and exhaustive biography of Wilder yet written, an accomplishment recognized when it was awarded the 2018 Pulitzer Prize for Biography.

Fraser has read just about everything there is to read by and about Wilder, including all of Wilder's published books and unpublished manuscripts, and all of the books and articles that have been written about Wilder. She also appears to have read all of the works by Wilder's daughter, Rose Wilder Lane, as well. That must have been a herculean task: Lane kept a diary, typed reams of letters to friends, published dozens of articles in newspapers and magazines, and wrote a number of books. Eighty of the *Prairie Fires's* 600 pages are footnotes.

But the book strives to do more than just chronicle the lives of Wilder and Lane. It sets their lives in the contexts of American national history. Fraser provides detailed descriptions of the Dakota War of 1862, the Homestead Act, and the settlement of the upper Midwest by white Americans. She explains how those events both shaped and were reflected in Wilder's life and works. The book also considers how World War I, the Great Depression, the Dust Bowl, and World War II affected Wilder's writing of the Little House books (they were published between 1932 and 1943). John Miller's book *Becoming Laura Ingalls Wilder* (1998) does some of this contextualization, but Fraser's work is more

comprehensive. She also has the benefit of nearly 20 more years of Wilder scholarship.

In a nutshell, Fraser's interpretation of the settlement of the northern Midwest and Great Plains is that thousands of families created an environmental catastrophe. In many places the land and climate could not sustain small farmers, but they attempted to settle there anyway, spurred on by advertising and pseudo-scientific ideas (like "rain follows the plow") that led to marginal existence and misery. Family members took jobs in town or relied on the support of others, including churches, local communities, and state governments. But government leaders frequently withheld support, and those who took it were often ashamed.

Fraser also attempts to understand how both Wilder and Lane thought. She allows their own words to speak for themselves but also provides her own interpretations of their actions. She is more sympathetic to Wilder than to Lane. Wilder is depicted as a woman hardened by misfortune but determined to make it on her own, one who loved nature and everything in it and who ultimately created a literary masterpiece for children. Her detailed descriptions, her feel for her own life and for her characters, and her love for her father all make the Little House books juvenile classics. By hard work she secured her family's economic security.

The book's depiction of Lane is much less positive. Throughout she is described as mixing the truth and fiction: in her articles for "yellow" newspapers during the 1910s and 1920s, in her fictional "biographies" of great men, in her work with her mother's life story, and in her personal correspondence. She was never able to manage money, and she suffered from depression and perhaps deeper mental illness. By the end of her life she had let her libertarian ideology take over her understanding of reality. Fraser gives Lane credit for editing and improving the Little House books, making them publishable and memorable, but she sees Wilder's writing as driving the books' popularity and staying power.

The book is divided into three parts that describe the life created by Wilder's family in the upper Midwest, the life she and her husband created together in Missouri, and the life that she and Lane created in print. This is a helpful organization, though the book might have benefited from more explicit explanation of this division of Wilder's life. The tone of the prose can also be somewhat abrasive. Fraser has little patience for those in the past who opposed government support for those in financial need. At times that impatience extends to large numbers of Americans in the past whom she sees as misguided. The reading experience would be improved by more empathy for those living in rural areas and small towns and those with traditionalist worldviews.

These are minor points, however, in comparison to the accomplishment that the book as a whole represents. *Prairie Fires* is a monument to Fraser's years of working in the archives and thousands of hours thinking about how best to understand the sources. It will be the last word on Wilder's and Lane's lives for years to come.

Billy Sunday, The Baseball Evangelist: The Story of a Remarkable Life, 1862–1935, by Craig A. Bishop. Collierville, TN: InstantPublisher, 2016. 100 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography. \$20.00 hardcover.

Reviewer David Brodnax Sr. is professor of history at Trinity Christian College. He is the author of "'Will They Fight? Ask the Enemy': Iowa's African American Regiment in the Civil War" (*Annals of Iowa*, 2007).

In the late 1800s and early 1900s Iowa produced what may have been a disproportionately large number of professional baseball participants, including seven Hall of Famers. Perhaps the most famous of them all achieved his greatest fame off the diamond. The life of Billy Sunday, who was born the orphaned son of a Civil War veteran and went from a middling major leaguer to America's leading Christian evangelist, is the focus of this self-published book by ministry leader and politician Craig A. Bishop.

The book consists largely of photographs and quotes from newspaper articles about Sunday's travels and speeches interspersed with Bishop's descriptions of his life based on newspaper articles and magazine biographies. This is followed by information about Billy Sunday landmarks, a brief account of Billy Graham (who was converted by men who knew Sunday), and interviews of fellow evangelicals who knew Sunday or his associates or whose deceased friends and family members did.

Although Bishop states that his goal is to "tell the story of a man who had a profound influence in our life and culture in America," he also injects his religious and political viewpoints into the past world in which Sunday lived (5). All historical scholarship reflects the values of its authors, but this is usually implicit. Bishop, on the other hand, asserts that theological liberals issued "false teachings" and that "Roosevelt's views of a large federal government were dangerous, socialist and anti-American" (61–62). He also theorizes that after Emma Goldman gave an anti-Sunday speech, "perhaps God had an answer" because the building in which she spoke caught fire but collapsed before the homes of nearby Christians were damaged. Bishop concludes, "Would this be a miracle from God? Coincidence?" (52–53). He is certainly entitled to these beliefs, but his explicit mention of them further highlights the

differences between his work and conventional historical analysis. He briefly cites Roger Bruns's biography but not William G. McLoughlin's classic study or more recent works by Robert Martin and Margaret Bendroth. This newer scholarship has benefited from access to Sunday family papers, but Bishop instead cites a Wikipedia article about Sunday's wife. He does not contextualize Billy Sunday within broader social changes such as urbanization, twentieth-century evangelical culture, or (despite the book's title and cover photo of Sunday in his baseball uniform) the creation of sports celebrity culture. The citations are sparse and somewhat disorganized (one footnote number is used twice), some of the items listed in the bibliography are not in the citations, and there are spelling and grammatical errors.

Those interested in facts, newspaper quotes, and photographs about the most famous Iowan of the early 1900s will find them in *The Baseball Evangelist*. The book may also be appreciated by those who share the author's values and would use Billy Sunday's life as a meditation on those values. Those who desire a more scholarly analysis or just a thorough and meticulous description, on the other hand, should look to one of the other works mentioned in this review.

Hoover: An Extraordinary Life in Extraordinary Times, by Kenneth Whyte. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2017. xvii, 728 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$35.00 hardcover.

Reviewer Kendrick A. Clements is Distinguished Professor of History emeritus at the University of South Carolina, Columbia. He is the author of *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Imperfect Visionary, 1918–1928* (2010).

Kenneth Whyte's *Hoover* is a thoughtful, well-researched, and well-written one-volume biography intended especially for the general reader. If it should miraculously emerge as the best seller it deserves to be, it could transform the reputation of the 31st president.

Written in brisk, vigorous language enlivened with flashes of wit, *Hoover* is downright fun to read. Colorful biographical sketches introduce major figures, and concise background summaries of important issues make following the story easy. Whyte is skillful in presenting both sides of issues fully and impartially, making it easy to understand why there was disagreement. Although the author is clearly sympathetic to Hoover's critique of big government, this is as near an impartial biography of this controversial figure as is likely to be written. And interestingly, impartiality serves Hoover well. Few if any other Americans can match his remarkable contributions to the nation and the world over a half-century of public service.

Yet as we all know, Hoover has never had the popular admiration that his career would seem to merit. One basic reason for that seeming paradox, Whyte argues, is that Hoover “carried through his days the scars of his miserable childhood” (xii). Orphaned before the age of 10 and sent to Oregon to live with an aunt and uncle who sustained him physically but treated him as cheap labor and offered little love, the boy grew up shy, withdrawn, hypersensitive to criticism, and awkward around others. He concluded that “money and success” were the “antidotes to vulnerability, a means of escape, and necessary to controlling one’s destiny” (30). After fleeing Oregon, he set out to make his fortune as a mining engineer and mine speculator in Australia, China, and London. “His path,” writes Whyte, “was littered with dry holes, lawsuits, and ruined investors, some of them the inevitable outcomes of an inherently risky business, others the special products of Hoover’s ways” (116), but by the age of 40 he had achieved the financial security he craved. There was not much about the robber baron Hoover of 1914 to draw public admiration.

Privately, however, Hoover was always generous to family and friends, even as he was clawing his way to wealth, and by the time World War I began he had already decided to give up business for public service. The war provided him the opportunity to use the same skills that had made him rich to undertake Belgian relief, mobilize American food production, and rehabilitate Europe’s postwar economy, in the process saving millions of lives. He had at least as good a case as Woodrow Wilson to receive the 1920 Nobel Peace Prize.

After serving as an innovative Secretary of Commerce under Presidents Harding and Coolidge, Hoover was elected president in 1928 just in time to face the Great Depression. Despite his modern reputation as a conservative, he threw the full resources of the federal government into fighting the collapse, working furiously to stabilize the international economic situation, and then introducing unprecedented legislation to rescue banking and industry. By the autumn of 1932, Whyte contends, Hoover “had in fact stopped the depression in its tracks and by most relevant measures forced its retreat” (506).

Unfortunately, whatever Hoover’s skill as chief executive, his personality made him a dreadful politician. Franklin Roosevelt, whom Whyte dismisses as “a man of second-rate intellect and questionable character” (497), ran a brilliant presidential campaign in 1932 that forever branded Hoover as an insensitive technocrat who had done nothing to relieve economic suffering. During the period between the election and Roosevelt’s inauguration, Democratic obstructionism in Congress and international doubts about the new president’s intentions toward the

gold standard led to a run on U.S. gold reserves and new bank failures, thus undoing most of what Hoover had accomplished.

Hoover found Americans' embrace of FDR incomprehensible. The New Deal, he would argue for the rest of his life, had failed to end the depression and at the same time made Americans "dependent on government" (541). As "an antidote to the New Deal" (557), in 1937 he called for government to confine itself to safeguarding equality of opportunity and individual enterprise. "Ideals, invention, initiative, enterprise, and leadership spring best from free men and women," he said, and "the only economic system which will not limit or destroy these forces of progress is private enterprise" (quoted, 556). That statement, Whyte declares, is the basis of "modern American conservatism" (557).

Perhaps so, but in recent years the widening gulf between the rich and poor suggests that Hoover's party has shifted its focus from maximizing opportunities for ordinary Americans to protecting the interests of the wealthiest. We may wonder whether the man who wanted the government to "stamp out predatory business practices" (205) and endorsed strong labor unions and the inheritance tax would be comfortable with his party's current policies.

Patriotism, Courage, & Sacrifice: Warren County's Response to WW II, by Jerry K. Beatty. Indianola: Warren County Historical Society, 2017. 401 pp. Illustrations, appendixes, bibliography, index. \$45.00 paperback.

Reviewer Terrence J. Lindell is professor of history at Wartburg College. His research interests include the World War II home front.

Jerry K. Beatty, former president of the Warren County Historical Society, dedicates this richly illustrated book to the county's 102 men lost in World War II and tells the story of its residents on battle front and home front. The work is divided into three chapters: the first deals with the military side of the conflict; the second recounts the home front; and the third—and by far the longest—provides biographical data on more than 3,200 service personnel who lived in Warren County, including those who attended Simpson College at some point either before or after the war. Beatty makes extensive use of local newspapers and interviews, but also relies on a variety of internet sources, including Wikipedia.

The chapter on military events is episodic because it focuses on the county's participants, especially casualties, although the inclusion of the Russian Front is odd. The section on the home front is a useful overview of the activities that took place in an Iowa county; anyone contemplating research on the Iowa home front would benefit from perusing it. The sections on relief efforts, war brides, and the repatriation of military

dead cover post-1945 events that are often neglected. The biographical portion is an extraordinary effort to tell the stories of the men and women who served in uniform. For some there is only a name and residence; for others there is considerable information on both civilian and military life, with quotations from letters or interviews. This section will appeal primarily to genealogists.

Civic Labors: Scholar Activism and Working-Class Studies, edited by Dennis Deslippe, Eric Fure-Slocum, and John W. McKerley. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2016. The Working Class in American History Series. x, 287 pp. Photograph, notes, index. \$95.00 hardcover, \$28.00 paperback.

Reviewer Gregory R. Zieren, a former interviewer with the Iowa Labor History Oral Project, is professor of history at Austin Peay State University. His research and writing have focused on Gilded Age economic and labor history.

Civic Labors is a collection of nearly two dozen articles and introductory essays written mainly by historians of the American working class. In the University of Illinois Press, the editors of the collection found the ideal publisher because the work fits perfectly in its Working Class in American History Series. No other major university press has made as enduring a commitment to labor and working-class history. As of last year, the series encompassed 125 titles with publication dates starting in the 1970s and continuing to today. *Civic Labors* belongs in the group because so many of its contributors wrote monographs for the series; the contributors' work, in turn, inspired others through their writing, teaching, and activism in labor, civil rights, and women's rights.

One clear attraction of *Civic Labors* for Iowa readers is its regional focus. Many of the contributors have careers based in midwestern universities, especially in Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Illinois. This is significant because involvement in civic labor means studying the past as historians while remaining engaged in the present locally in fights for labor representation and other social justice struggles. Peter Rachleff, for instance, taught at Macalester College in Saint Paul, Minnesota, and became well known in labor circles for his support for striking packing-house workers at the Hormel plant in Austin, Minnesota; Ralph Scharnau, from the University of Dubuque, devoted a career to labor and Iowa history and then became an activist defending faculty rights at the university from new management determined to make faculty submissive to their restrictive policies. H. Shelton Stromquist at the University of Iowa, James Barrett at the University of Illinois, and Stephen Meyer at

the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee all crossed the lines between historians studying the past and activists engaged in fights for representation and fairness in the present. The pre-eminent scholar in the collection is the late David Montgomery, Farnam Professor of History at Yale University and doctoral dissertation supervisor for several of the scholars represented in *Civic Labors*. The origins of the book can be traced to a scholarly celebration for Shel Stromquist in 2011 held on the campus of the University of Iowa. Montgomery was a keynote speaker, a scholar held in virtually universal esteem by labor and working-class historians generally. The event was one of the last academic events before his death later that same year. Perhaps no labor historian in the post-World War II era contributed as much to the field as Montgomery.

One topic that unites labor and community activists with academically trained scholars is oral history. Five essays in the collection relate in some fashion to the promise and perils of oral history, from the ambitious attempt to find voices for a 1911 dockers' strike in Liverpool, England, to the State Historical Society of Iowa's Iowa Labor History Oral Project. In the late 1970s that venture started collecting oral histories from veterans of Iowa's labor movement; it continues today to record interviews and manage a collection of about 1,200 subjects.

The wide range of topics might suggest a lack of coherence or a mere collection of unrelated essays. But the editors of *Civic Labors* tried to bring intellectual consistency to the topics at hand. For the most part the essayists are senior, experienced historians who can look back on careers devoted to the causes of labor, the working class, and the quest for social justice for ordinary Americans. They are scholars and teachers and writers, but they have devoted a good portion of their working lives to the quest to help and understand others outside academia by using their time, talent, and skills for that broader agenda. There are no outspoken conservatives among the writers of *Civic Labors*. Critics, therefore, might point to the extracurricular work of these scholars and their left-oriented publications and declare that liberal bias in higher education is alive and well. But criticism like that fails to consider the most important characteristics of scholar activism. The writers in question in this book have devoted substantial effort to organizing, documenting, encouraging, and sustaining movements to help their fellow citizens improve their lives. Many of the essays testify to that level of engagement. Rather than evidence of bias, another interpretation would assert that their work is evidence of commitment, a moral quest, and a belief in a higher standard.

The final essay in the collection is David Montgomery's. He celebrates the achievements of the activists and wonders where the next

generation will apply its energies. Some of the essays in *Civic Labors* point to ongoing struggles for fair treatment and a decent living standard. Iowa is no longer the industrial powerhouse it once was in coal mining, meatpacking, and agricultural implement manufacturing. The essays in this collection point to future battles in new arenas for workers of all sorts and the scholar activists who will continue the struggle, much as those represented in this fine collection have done.

The Capital Times: A Proudly Radical Newspaper's Century-Long Fight for Justice and for Peace, by Dave Zweifel and John Nichols. Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2017. xv, 319 pp. Illustrations, appendices, note on sources, index. \$25.00 paperback.

Reviewer Frank Durham is associate professor of journalism in the University of Iowa School of Journalism and Mass Communication. His research interests include journalism history and media framing analysis.

Full of clear, engaging writing and photos depicting a century of progressive activism by the *Capitol Times*, this history of the Madison (Wisconsin) daily afternoon newspaper recalls a time when there were giants on the Left in America. Much more than nostalgia, however, the essays in this volume offer a meaningful history of the newspaper's glory days. This well-written account by the newspaper's longtime former editor Dave Zweifel and current associate editor John Nichols celebrates the iconic media outlet's career as a local newspaper with a national voice and, especially, a *progressive* voice. As the authors make clear, one need not look further than the 2011 occupation of the state capitol by anti-Scott Walker protesters to see that liberal legacy alive and kicking in Madison today.

In the book's introduction, Zweifel and Nichols describe the "*Cap Times*" as a newspaper with a "soul." Then they proceed to show it. By using the vast resources of the Wisconsin State Historical Society and their own files, the authors have researched a detailed narrative that I enjoyed for its "energetic morality." If that term seems odd, the look in the eye of progressives, both early and late, shown in the book's dozens of documentary photographs will make it clear. At that core level, the authors succeed in bringing to life the time when William T. Evjue could define progressivism in his editorials and take it to the ballot box, too.

Offering detailed accounts of aggressive reporting and pointed editorializing, the authors describe the positions to which Evjue staked the *Times*, detailing one signal liberal moment after another, both in their engaging narrative and through photos. Evjue left the conservative *Madison Wisconsin State Journal* in 1917 to oppose war profiteers and the U.S. entry

into the war. In pursuit of his goal to publish a "people's paper," Evjue would train his sights on big business and industry from then on.

Among the many liberal causes Evjue championed or challenged, perhaps none had more impact than his founding of the Progressive Party with Robert "Bob" La Follette in 1924. Although in his "insurgent" presidential run La Follette won only Wisconsin, by then the course was set. The authors explain, "Progressivism, as espoused by La Follette and his allies at the start of the twentieth century shaped the ideology of the *Capital Times* and its crusading spirit." That spirit was quickly tested when, in the same year, the paper exposed and condemned a mass meeting of the Ku Klux Klan in Madison.

In 1951 the newspaper's editors recognized Joseph McCarthy early on as a demagogue and a fear monger. At a time when many state and major national newspapers were supporting McCarthy, the *Times* fought him relentlessly "with all its resources," even as it would take on environmental, civil rights, racial, and antiwar issues over time.

Between them, Zweifel and Nichols reflect a key transition for their newspaper from hard copy to digital format. Indeed, the published edition of the *Times* outlived most other city afternoon dailies elsewhere in the country by decades, largely due to a joint Madison Newspapers, Inc., with the *State Journal*. Today a quick search of the Web finds the "*Cap Times*" alive and well with "front page" editorial content by Nichols that Evjue would applaud.

As a "house history," this book offers insight to future historians of journalism. As a memoir of another era, it reminds us that progressivism has faced down war and famine before. And that it can, again.

The Floppy Show, by Jeff Stein. Images of America Series. Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2018. 128 pp. Illustrations. \$21.99 paperback.

Reviewer Phillip J. Hutchison is associate professor of Integrated Strategic Communication at the University of Kentucky. He is the author of "The Lost World of Marshal J: History, Memory, and Iowa's Forgotten Broadcast Legend" (*Annals of Iowa*, 2009).

Local entertainment television may be one of the most overlooked social legacies of the mid-twentieth century. Most local television stations broadcast two to five hours of locally produced entertainment programming each weekday from the 1950s through the 1970s. Moreover, viewers did not just watch these local television programs passively; rather, they actively engaged these television rituals as part of their experience of local life. Yet often these realities have been lost to history for two reasons: First, few of these programs were documented, much less

archived. Second, all too many contemporary broadcasters, historians, and media critics dismiss local entertainment programs as a prefabricated television aesthetic of little substance—it was amusing, but not much else. Fortunately, Iowa broadcast historian Jeff Stein has never fallen prey to this shortsightedness. Stein's latest book, *The Floppy Show*, is a case in point. Although technically the 127-page book is a popular history that is accessible to diverse audiences, Stein treats the subject matter as a serious social phenomenon. As a result, the book offers valuable insights to any student of Iowa history.

The Floppy Show chronicles a well-remembered hosted cartoon program that aired on WHO-TV in Des Moines from 1957 through 1987. Floppy, a high-voiced beagle puppet, was the creation of legendary Iowa broadcaster Duane Ellett. Stein illustrates how Ellett and Floppy helped structure daily life in central Iowa for three decades. Accordingly, readers will learn how Ellett's warm, reassuring presence created a virtual refuge for diverse audiences at predictable times each day. As with most local histories from Arcadia Publishing, *The Floppy Show* emphasizes photographs over detailed historical narratives. In this case, however, Stein collected and presented approximately 250 photographs and captions in ways that create a visual narrative, one that weaves through overlapping institutional, social, and historical phenomena. Broadcast historians, for example, will appreciate how the visual narrative chronicles Ellett's professional evolution. In the absence of early recordings, the book's images document sponsors, studio sets, and program formats, all of which inform the relationship between television institutions and culture. Additionally, the images and captions provide an insightful history of promotional communication during the first generation of television.

To students of social history, the visual narrative also tells an important story of mid-twentieth-century life in Iowa. Ellett and Floppy hobnobbed with nearly everyone who was anyone in Iowa during that era. Accordingly, readers will find myriad photographs of the duo interacting with an array of major celebrities and political figures. Equally significant, Stein documents scores of public appearances in which Ellett and Floppy engaged enthusiastic fans of all ages. Although some of those visits reflected commercial promotions, others (such as hospital visits and charity drives) represented the sorts of community outreach efforts associated with local television personalities. These factors underscore the point that audiences actively engaged these programs and their creators as part of local life. The fact that every Iowa television station featured similar entertainment programs highlights the generalizability of Stein's insights.

Yes, for many readers, popular histories such as *The Floppy Show* will evoke a great deal of nostalgia; but serious historians should not confuse nostalgia with frivolity. As American Studies scholar George Lipsitz observes, “The messages of popular culture circulate in a network of production and reception that is quite serious. . . . A sideshow sometimes can be the main event.” Accordingly, Stein effectively illustrates why a long-running children’s cartoon show that featured a dog puppet should be considered a main event in Iowa history.

History Comes Alive: Public History and Popular Culture in the 1970s, by M. J. Rymsza-Pawlowska. Studies in United States Culture. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017. xiii, 241 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 paperback.

Reviewer Rebecca Conard is professor history emerita at Middle Tennessee State University, where she directed the public history program. She is the author of *Benjamin Shambaugh and the Intellectual Foundations of Public History* (2002).

Iowa Living History Farms, which opened in 1970, and the World Food Conference of 1976, held at Iowa State University, were Iowa’s two nationally recognized U.S. Bicentennial projects, but Iowans marked the nation’s 200th anniversary with hundreds of undertakings—from the restoration of Old Capitol in Iowa City and Terrace Hill in Des Moines to the 811 towns and cities recognized as Bicentennial Communities, the 1,500 “Iowa Heritage in the American Revolution” study kits distributed to fifth-grade teachers, and the 5,000 farms that qualified for Century Farm designation. Iowa led the nation with 2,800 recorded projects and events, 50 percent more than any other state. (See *Iowa and the U.S. Bicentennial, 1776–1976: The Final Report* [1976].) Iowa isn’t mentioned once in *History Comes Alive: Public History and Popular Culture in the 1970s*, but if you are curious about the larger context in which bicentennial celebrations—and protests—occurred, read this book.

The author, M. J. Rymsza-Pawlowska, sees the bicentennial as a pivotal event in American cultural history. As she reads the 1970s, the bicentennial, as well as the decade itself, marked a transformation of historical consciousness among Americans. She argues that in the 1970s a “logic of preservation” gave way to a “logic of reenactment” as a way of making sense of the past (6–7). By this she means that history-based performative activities, such as living history, reenactment, and immersive or interactive experiences at museums and historic sites, began to challenge the traditional mode of understanding the past through documents and other material evidence. The author’s premise concerning

the “logic of preservation” — that it “relies on stable and uncontested material evidence” (6) — might be questionable, but she nonetheless weaves a convincing argument that “reenactive engagement with history emerged in the 1970s as a primary mode of historymaking” (167).

Rymsza-Pawlowska unpacks the complicated politics of the American Revolution Bicentennial Commission (ARBC), the initial federal planning body, and the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration (ARBA), which replaced it. She traces the shift from centralized planning wedded to the traditional metanarrative of Anglo-American history under the ARBC to a decentralized approach under the ARBA, which encouraged much greater citizen participation, with all the creativity and unpredictability that came with it. Not surprisingly, the author focuses more on the latter. For instance, she makes only passing reference in a lengthy list of patriotic projects promoted by the ARBC to the American Freedom Train, a traveling exhibition of Americana that included George Washington’s copy of the Constitution (59), but she devotes a whole chapter to a host of reenactment projects that sprang from state and local sources, such as reenactments of the LaSalle Expedition of 1681 from Montreal to New Orleans and the 1776 Juan Bautista de Anza Expedition from Mexico City to San Francisco, and the Bicentennial Wagon Train, a year-long, multistate effort to retrace westward expansion in reverse from various points in the West to Valley Forge. She does not assert that reenactment events were new in the 1970s but, rather, that the “forms and purposes of reenactment [changed] considerably” (119).

The author’s examination extends to related shifts taking place in American culture. She notes the rise of history-themed prime-time television shows such as *The Waltons* and *Little House on the Prairie* and the new miniseries genre popularized by *Roots*. She also points to the democratizing trend in historic preservation from upper-class groups focused on preserving revered architectural gems to community-based organizations increasingly interested in preserving buildings associated with ordinary people and historic districts that still held a certain feel of the past.

Much of Rymsza-Pawlowska’s attention, however, is trained on cultural politics. The People’s Bicentennial Commission (PBC), a private organization that challenged the partisanship of the ARBC under the Nixon Administration and helped bring about its demise, also helped to put a finer point on social activism. In Boston, for example, the PBC as well as disabled veterans, Native Americans, and feminists repurposed the official commemoration of the 1773 Boston Tea Party by calling attention to the long history of inequality in American society. In a different vein, the Afro-American Bicentennial Corporation, another private organization, and many black activists, including the

Black Panther Party, sought to build on the earlier Black Arts movement by adding African American histories to the American narrative. The combined strength of bicentennial counterpoint movements led to the transformation of what the author calls "the American archive" of stories, events, and personalities associated with American identity (139ff). The full scope of inquiry in this book is difficult to capture in a brief review; suffice to say that Rymysza-Pawlowska's analysis of American popular culture in the 1970s in relation to the U.S. Bicentennial helps explain why the culture wars, which began in the 1970s, have gradually become the new normal.

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