Orange City

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Readers will find the methodology employed by Wormer, Jackson, and Sudduth useful in understanding the presentation of the maids’ narratives. They conducted 23 interviews, 17 of which are presented in this book. Most of the data came from women who migrated to Iowa. What is presented in this volume is transformative because we hear black maids putting voices to experiences, moving us from discourses concerning theories of race, class, and place to a practical understanding. Equally intriguing is how white women of today, in an age of political correctness, describe their role as former employers, seeing themselves at times as distant family members. In an objective and integrated fashion, these three scholars have communicated a grand narrative about white life and black help. Readers can form their own conclusions regarding these human relations and decide whether they tell a different story of migration from the South to the Midwest.

Scholars and critics, distrustful of oral history and memory, might question the work’s reliability, interpretations, and rigor. But the methodologies and theories used in researching, framing, writing, and compiling this collection are appropriate and capture stunningly well this aspect of America’s past. Policymakers and those responsible for implementing social and political policies should appreciate this volume. Students and scholars of Iowa history will find it useful for understanding black life and the struggle for humanity in the United States.


Reviewer David Zwart is assistant professor of history at Grand Valley State University, Allendale, Michigan. His research and writing have focused on Dutch American communities in the Midwest.

This thin, heavily illustrated book packs a surprisingly serious historical punch. The introduction provides an overview of the Dutch immigrant pioneers who founded Orange City in the northwest corner of Iowa. The first three chapters cover the founding years from 1869 to 1901, the early twentieth century to 1929, and the Great Depression and war years. Each of these chapters begins with a brief overview followed by a photo essay on the developments in the town during that period. Two thematic chapters follow, one on Northwestern Academy/College and the other on the Tulip Festival. Those chapters chart how those important institutions changed over time. The final chapter covers the post–World War II era to the present, particularly highlighting business developments.
Readers with local knowledge will appreciate the variety of photos, from Henry Hospers to the Pizza Ranch. Multiple images capture the changing downtown business district. The captions include references to landmarks and street names to help readers orient themselves to the current town. Outsiders get an insider’s view of a particular midwestern small town’s material development from a village to a more diversified town. All readers will benefit from the careful selection and analysis of the photos. The captions for the 200 photos tell the story with a historical sense of the larger context of the developments in the town. These captions should serve as a model for others who use photographs in their work, from authors to historical museums to genealogists.


Reviewer Bill R. Douglas of Des Moines has written about World War I-era Iowa and Iowa’s religious history. Full disclosure: he doesn’t drink spirits, rarely drinks wine, but is fond of beer.

I approached *Gentlemen Bootleggers* expecting a romp about bootleggers, with the possibility of gleaning some information about Prohibition. Instead I got a fully formed social history of a small western Iowa town and its environs, from World War I to the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment—with, of course, an emphasis on alcohol and its governmentally mandated scarcity. I also learned from researching the subtitle that *cahoots* was not, as I suspected, of Punjabi origin, but Old French for “in the same hut.” That seems to have had surprising resonance in early twentieth-century Carroll County, Iowa.

*Gentlemen Bootleggers* is, secondarily, a tale of two Iowa Herbert Hoovers. One left the state and accumulated enough wealth to be able to drink legally in the Belgian Embassy while a cabinet member during Prohibition, ran successfully as a dry for U.S. president in 1928, and modified his position to support legal beer during his reelection campaign—his defeat should, of course, be attributed to other issues. The other Herbert Hoover stayed in Iowa as a blacksmith and invented a recipe for whiskey flavored with rye that would catch the attention of a thirsty but still discriminating public. That the latter Hoover would succeed was the result of successful branding and resourceful organizational skills. (Perhaps that description could apply to the more prominent Hoover as well.) Here Joe Irlbeck came in to provide the strategic