

Grinnell College in the Nineteenth Century: From Salvation to Service

ISSN 0003-4827

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Recommended Citation

"Grinnell College in the Nineteenth Century: From Salvation to Service." *The Annals of Iowa* 57 (1998), 171-174.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.10162>

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The emphasis on rights guaranteed from the center undermined democracy rather than advancing it because it changed its meaning "from process to results" (215). People without the power to make real decisions in their localities simply became consumers not only of goods and services but also of ideas and policies, the extent and variety being provided by experts from the national class. Reaction came in the form of a revolt against liberalism, a growing resentment and suspicion of the center—of the national government, the media, higher education, and other institutions of the national class. The national class retained, indeed extended, its economic power, although it faced challenges on the cultural front. But these challenges did not weaken the new hierarchy or signal a return to self-rule because the national and local middle classes, even in the midst of their conflicts, agreed "in denying the lower class a voice" in the debates and thereby "short-circuited the democratic process" (246).

The only way to revitalize democracy, Wiebe concludes, is to reverse the centralization, destroy the ruling hierarchy, and return authority and power to local communities. Piecemeal reforms will not do the job. Rather, the people must reassert their authority by reasserting their self-rule in much the same way as they asserted their authority in the early nineteenth century.

This is a difficult, fascinating, and often brilliant book that breaks with the received notions of both liberals and conservatives and therefore will probably irritate both—which Wiebe probably intended. But it should provoke rethinking about the culture of American democracy—which Wiebe certainly intended. This book deserves to be read and pondered by serious students of American history and contemporary observers of the so-called culture wars.

Grinnell College in the Nineteenth Century: From Salvation to Service, by Joseph Frazier Wall. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1997. xxii, 315 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY WILLIAM C. RINGENBERG, TAYLOR UNIVERSITY

What do you do when the beloved historian you had commissioned to write the sesquicentennial history of your institution suddenly dies with the project only partially completed? President George Drake of Grinnell College faced that unwelcome question in the fall of 1995, the year before the beginning of the college's grand celebration. For President Drake, the death of Joseph Wall not only presented an administrative problem (what to do with the incomplete manuscript) but also created a deep sense of personal loss. "For countless Grin-

nellians," Drake noted, "he was *the* great teacher in their lives (this certainly was the case for me)" (xviii). Drake's solution was to enlist the services of Wall's wife and fellow Grinnell graduate, Beatrice Mills Wall, to complete the chapter Wall had been writing, and to publish the manuscript as a history of the college in the nineteenth century.

Grinnell College (known as Iowa College until 1909) is one of a group of midwestern and western colleges to be founded in the middle and late nineteenth century by missionary-minded, New England—and transplanted New England—Calvinists. Colleges of similar origin, most of which shared Grinnell's zeal for social reform and some of which had a similar record of being a combination colony and town, included Oberlin in Ohio, Olivet and Hillsdale in Michigan, Knox and Wheaton in Illinois, Tabor in Iowa, Ripon in Wisconsin, Carleton in Minnesota, and Colorado, Whitman, and Pomona in the Far West.

In the early 1840s, eleven Andover Seminary (Massachusetts) students committed themselves to go as a group to a frontier region as home missionaries and to found a New England-type college. Meanwhile, the dynamic Congregationalist minister Asa Turner, recently relocated from Illinois to the Iowa Territory, repeatedly had been sending pleas to the American Home Missionary Society (a joint Congregationalist-Presbyterian organization) to recruit more home missionaries for the Iowa field. The Andover students not only responded to this call, but once in Iowa (and then known as the Iowa Band) several of them, together with Turner and two other Yale graduates, comprised the majority of the first board of trustees when Iowa College was established in Davenport in 1846. The college received help in its early years from the Society for the Promotion of Collegiate and Theological Education at the West, a subsidiary of the American Home Missionary Society. In 1858 the college relocated from the Mississippi River city to the inland Congregational colony town begun 120 miles to the west by Josiah Bushnell Grinnell, a Congregationalist minister, abolitionist, and idealist.

The college had only two presidents during the nineteenth century, and much of its record reflects or is exemplified by these two men, George F. Magoun (1865–1884) and George A. Gates (1887–1900), and their contrasting personalities, values, and styles. Magoun was the son of a coauthor of the famous Maine prohibition law (the first such state statute in the country), and he moved to the Grinnell presidency from the board of trustees, where he had been the most influential member. The college over which he presided was small,

mostly local in reputation, orthodox in theology, and governed largely by his personal fiat. The curriculum was still largely classical, and the extracurriculum featured literary societies that promoted the development of forensic skills such as those Magoun masterfully displayed. Gates came to Grinnell from a Congregational pastorate in New Jersey. Earlier he had embraced Darwinian biology and the Social Gospel theology. As a public speaker, he expressed stimulating ideas even if his voice lacked the magisterial quality of his predecessor. In the curriculum, Gates, like Magoun, promoted science, but the new president's active promotion of intercollegiate athletics and physical education was a marked departure from the previous pattern. (Despite the earlier official discouragement of intercollegiate athletics, the Grinnell students in 1868 managed to defeat the University of Iowa baseball team 24-0 in the first intercollegiate athletic contest in Iowa.) The late nineteenth-century faculty was becoming more professional, and both they and the students appreciated the more open spirit of decision making under Gates. During the Gates administration the school experienced marked growth in the size of the student body and faculty, and the leadership in the Social Gospel movement by Gates and his most widely known—and most controversial—professor, George Herron, gave the school a national reputation.

A more chronologically complete account of these events was published in 1953 (John S. Nollen, *Grinnell College*). Nonetheless, the publication of Wall's incomplete manuscript is a welcome addition. A major strength of Wall's work is his ability to tell his story in such an engaging manner. Trained as a narrative historian by his mentor at Columbia University, Allan Nevins, Wall gained wide recognition for his biographies of Andrew Carnegie and Alfred DuPont. Furthermore, his writing is as clear as it is lively, and he places the Grinnell record in the larger context of American history. Narrative history writing in general, however, has liabilities as well as obvious strengths, both of which are reflected in Wall's work. Narrative historians tend to overemphasize biography and conflict, flesh out stories to the point of embellishment, and employ generalizations that appear too sweeping and language that is too chatty, loose, and cliché-ridden. Wall's indiscretions in these areas, while not serious or pronounced, are nonetheless apparent. Then there is the strange title for chapter seven—"Secularizing the Mission, 1884-1887." I found significant change but no evidence in this or the other chapters demonstrating secularization in the nineteenth-century history of the college.

This work is a solid and in some ways masterful contribution to the historiography of American higher education. President Drake

should now turn his attention to finding a scholar to write the twentieth-century history of Grinnell.

Homicide, Race, and Justice in the American West, 1880–1920, by Clare V. McKanna Jr. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997. xiv, 206 pp. Illustrations, maps, graphs, tables, notes, index. \$40.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY MICHAEL J. PFEIFER, UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

For a number of years, historians have debated the extent and nature of violence in the American West in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Scholars such as Robert Dykstra, finding relatively low homicide rates in Kansas cattle towns in the early 1870s, sought to debunk the popular image of the West as an especially lethal place. Others, like Roger McGrath, who looked at evidence from gold rush towns, argued that western locales were as deadly as their reputation suggested.

Clare McKanna makes a signal contribution to the debate over western violence by analyzing homicide and the provision of justice for racial minorities in Douglas County, Nebraska; Las Animas County, Colorado; and Gila County, Arizona. Perhaps the most impressive and original aspect of his exhaustive research involves the tabulation of homicide rates from coroner's inquests. McKanna correctly notes that records of coroner's juries constitute a far more comprehensive and accurate chronicle of homicides in a given county than registers of grand jury indictments. Historians' neglect of coroner's inquests has severely impeded the accuracy of their depiction of the incidence and nature of homicide. McKanna finds rates of homicide in his counties that far exceeded those in large eastern cities such as New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. Additionally, McKanna offers a detailed and valuable discussion of the typical circumstances of homicide (including the crucial mix of alcohol and handguns); a useful contextualization of the patterns of violence based on a "critical convergence" of ethnic and racial diversification, industrialization, and urbanization; and an innovative analysis of plea bargaining by African Americans, Apaches, and Hispanics as an index of structural disadvantages for minorities in western criminal justice systems.

The study's numerous strengths are accompanied by several weaknesses. Most importantly, these three counties cannot be considered "representative of the American West" (163). Douglas County (which included Omaha) was too urban. And although western ethnic and racial diversity has been underappreciated, Las Animas and

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