

Growing Up With the Town: Family and Community on the Great Plains

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similar to that during the days of Populism, and belies the importance of the impact of his radio addresses" (147-49).

I have one quibble regarding the authors' treatment of this new and crucial technology. It might be surmised from a reading of these books that the AMA disapproved of radio as a suitable medium for dispensing health advice. It did not. Rather, the AMA disapproved of the quacks' methods, particularly in diagnosing and prescribing over the airwaves. Both authors admit as much, but the point could have been handled with a bit more finesse, perhaps by building a counterpoint out of such popular radio health shows of the time as *Highways to Health*, *The Health Hunters*, or *Your Health*. This quibble, though, in no way overshadows the excellent start both authors have made in revising our understanding of quackery in Middle America.

Growing Up with the Town: Family and Community on the Great Plains, by Dorothy Hubbard Schwieder. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2002. xvii, 198 pp. Illustrations, notes, index, \$29.95 cloth.

Reviewer John E. Miller is professor of history at South Dakota State University. He is working on a book about small-town boys who grew up in the Midwest.

American urban historians have devoted most of their attention to places like Chicago, Boston, and Los Angeles. In recent years, increasing attention has focused on smaller towns and communities. Dorothy Schwieder, a native of the small town of Presho, South Dakota, uses this memoir of growing up with the town during the first 18 years of her life as a vehicle for examining what that kind of life was like on the northern plains before mid-century. Presho, established in 1905 when the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad extended its line west of the Missouri River from Chamberlain to Rapid City, grew to a population of 635 by the 1910 census, before leveling off as the community engaged in a long-term struggle for survival as a service center for its surrounding agricultural hinterland (its population in 2000 was 588).

Schwieder, professor emerita of history at Iowa State University and author of a number of books on Iowa history, including *Iowa: The Middle Land*, skillfully applies her academic expertise in this engaging narrative to provide broader meaning and significance to the daily events and developments of her town and family. She draws on her own personal memories and those of her siblings (there were ten children in the family, Dorothy being the second-youngest), but she supplements those memories with research in newspapers, county histories, census manuscripts, and other historical sources. From her vantage point in Iowa, she remains close enough to her hometown to retain a

strong sense of personal ties and kinship but is far enough away to view her experience through the objective lens of the social historian.

The book is divided into two sections. The first establishes the historical background and context of the town and her family's experience there. The second is based largely on Schwieder's own recollections of growing up in Presho between 1933 and 1951, when she enrolled in college at Dakota Wesleyan in Mitchell, South Dakota. Her father's parents emigrated from northern Ireland during the late 1870s, at the start of the Great Dakota Boom; her mother's (her father's second wife) came to the United States from Norway during the 1890s. Schwieder does a nice job of describing the differences in backgrounds and experiences that separated her parents, but also notes their shared commitment to the necessity and value of hard work and the importance of family.

Making reference to previous studies of small towns by John Hudson, Paula Nelson, Lewis Atherton, and others, this well-written account takes its place on a short list of books that focus on the history of towns on the northern plains. Although the focus is on life in town, always lurking in the background is the singular importance of environment on the semi-arid, wind-swept, largely treeless landscape, often the victim of drought and harsh weather conditions. Compensating for the challenges of the environment are the beauty and allure of nature's surroundings in the region.

Schwieder's descriptions of main street businesses, church and school activities, and social and cultural developments sound themes familiar to students of local history, while at the same time they take note of the peculiarities of life in Presho. Of special interest in the story of her family is how thoroughly her father dominated the household and its activities, even though most of his waking hours were spent in his office at his successful farm implement business. Especially valuable are the nuanced descriptions of the values that the author and her siblings imbibed within the household and in the community: practicality, materialism, self-reliance, compassion, neighborliness, trust, a sense of personal safety and security, and, above all, hard work. Although Schwieder does not neglect the darker aspects of small-town life, her recollections are, in the main, positive. "While Presho had its faults, it was a good place to grow up," she concludes (144).

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