

# Dubuque's Forgotten Cemetery: Excavating a Nineteenth-Century Burial Ground in a Twenty-First-Century City

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audiences" (17). Blending this "original pioneer spirit" with scholarly insight, they believe, will stimulate modern readers to appreciate "one of the greatest mass migrations in American history" (34).

To ensure their success, the editors provide four maps originally printed in earlier studies such as John Unruh's *The Plains Across*, photographs of key figures, illustrations of trail landmarks, and thorough explanatory introductions and footnotes. They also include an impressive bibliography of scholarly works and trail narratives. Among the voices chosen are well-known historical figures and those less so: Pierre-Jean De Smet, the Jesuit priest and missionary; Medorem Crawford, one of the original Oregon pioneers; Lilburn Boggs, a former Missouri governor who settled in California; Lucy Jane Hall Bennett, a survivor of Stephen Meeks's infamous cutoff; and Amanda Esrey Rhoads, a member of the Mormon migration in 1846. All describe life on the trail or in their new land. Some offer practical advice about what to bring or leave behind. All fulfill the editors' expectations. This volume, along with those to follow in the series, will prove extremely helpful for researchers; and anyone interested in the lives of western pioneers will find these stories engaging and instructive.

*Dubuque's Forgotten Cemetery: Excavating a Nineteenth-Century Burial Ground in a Twenty-First-Century City*, by Robin M. Lillie and Jennifer E. Mack. Iowa and the Midwest Experience. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2015. 228 pp. Maps, table, illustrations, appendix, notes, recommended reading, index. \$27.50 paperback.

Reviewer Thomas G. Connors is associate professor of history at the University of Northern Iowa. His areas of research interest include cemeteries and burial practices.

Since the mid-nineteenth century, Americans have approached burial with particular assumptions and common practices, including the notion that cemeteries remain in place in perpetuity, a permanent landscape of stone monuments and well-tended lawns. Dubuque's Third Street Cemetery predates these Victorian practices. It existed as a Catholic burial ground for early settlers from 1833 until 1880, two decades after newer diocesan cemeteries had opened. It never had grass lawns or many monuments; most graves would have had wood markers or remained unmarked. Disused and long uncared for, the cemetery faded from the landscape, particularly after a convent was built on the site and surviving monuments were relocated about 1948. By then, most residents believed that all the graves had been removed decades earlier. Despite recurrent evidence to the contrary in intervening years, that was

thought to be the case until 2007, when graves began turning up as the land was prepared for redevelopment. Iowa law required the matter to be handed over to the Office of the State Archaeologist. The resulting excavation over several years led to a scholarly archaeological report and this more user-friendly presentation of the findings, *Dubuque's Forgotten Cemetery*.

The excavation found 939 graves containing skeletal remains of 889 individuals in what had been about a quarter of the cemetery grounds. This is the largest Euro-American Roman Catholic cemetery ever so examined, making its conclusions of national significance. Using archaeological and documentary evidence, the book's authors set out what can be said about the cemetery's history and burials. Ultimately, the remains and goods found were in poor condition, limiting the conclusions that could be drawn from them. Contrary to what may be imagined, no coffin remained intact, and precious little beyond some wood, metal, buttons, bone, and teeth survived. The evidence for elaborate coffins and clothing certainly reflects Victorian practices from the later period. By contrast, simpler wood caskets and burial garments may represent the limited resources of the pioneer period or just of the deceased. A fifth of the burials contained religious goods, principally holy medals or rosaries, common in Catholic devotional practice. Less information could be drawn from deteriorated bones (height, sex, age, some diseases, injuries) and teeth (age, wear, childhood malnutrition).

Without a plot map or monuments, matching names to graves proved mainly impossible, although engraved crosses identified two individuals. Documentary sources contributed considerably more information on those buried in the cemetery, including two murderers hanged in 1860. Although not everyone buried here was Catholic, evidence confirms numerous Irish and German immigrants, with some French Canadians and possibly an African American family, about what would be expected from Dubuque's first half-century.

Most importantly, the authors' reflections offer a model for what should be done when "lost" cemeteries resurface in the way of progress. One finding is that the one million dollars spent on scientific excavation is cheaper than commercial removal. Another is the importance of local involvement. Communicating with the community throughout the process helps curtail negative rumors and builds support for the project. While much of what was commonly believed turned out to be wrong or unproven (few graves had been removed; there was no evidence of mass graves for cholera or influenza victims), drawing on local genealogical societies and archives (Loras College's Center for Dubuque History) provided much of the documentary evidence that brought the

cemetery's story to life. Property owners past and present were less helpful: the developer filed lawsuits and eventually abandoned the project; the archdiocesan archivist stonewalled requests for information.

The authors draw thoughtful conclusions about what society owes the dead it decides to relocate, and they suggest a template for how that can be accomplished with respect and dignity, while at the same time recording what can be learned from the site. The experience in Dubuque underlines the challenges of such an undertaking, perhaps making a case that avoiding the disturbance of burial grounds may be the best policy except in the most compelling cases of public need. This volume itself honors the lost cemetery by gathering together what can be known about it and providing rare evidence from a pioneer immigrant cemetery in a river town. By doing so, it makes an important contribution to the history of Dubuque, Iowa, and American burial practices.

*Busy in the Cause: Iowa, the Free-State Struggle in the West, and the Prelude to the Civil War*, by Lowell J. Soike. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014. xvi, 288 pp. Map, illustrations, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$30.00 paperback.

Reviewer Michael A. Morrison is associate professor of history at Purdue University. He is the author of *Slavery and the American West: The Eclipse of Manifest Destiny and the Coming of the Civil War* (1997).

In this deeply researched, closely argued, revelatory, and highly readable monograph, Lowell Soike situates the Kansas territorial crisis within the larger context of midwestern sectional politics. He clearly shows how Iowa was both affected by and itself influenced events in that troubled territory. It did so primarily in three ways: as violence escalated in Kansas, the state sent settlers, furnished arms from its arsenal to free-state combatants, and offered a refuge to antislavery forces who temporarily fled the territory. Iowa also provided a training ground for John Brown's supporters who would attack Harpers Ferry in October 1859. After the violence in Kansas abated (it never completely disappeared), settlements in Iowa, particularly those populated by evangelicals, were havens for slaves fleeing Kansas as they passed through the state on their way north to freedom.

Whereas most studies of the conflict focus on the pro- and antislavery struggle within the territory, Soike's is an outward-looking perspective that demonstrates how it shaped Iowans' growing commitment to the Free-State cause. Encouraged by David Rice Atchison and Benjamin and John Stringfellow, unorganized proslavery bands dramatically upped the level of violence, closed the Missouri River to northerners