

Jews in Wisconsin

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schemes but also led to a series of very real antiblack territorial and state statutes aimed at preventing black immigration to Iowa. Beyond a desire to avoid antagonizing the South, that racial imperative to keep blacks out also helps explain why Iowans terrorized abolitionists and supported the Fugitive Slave Act. Moreover, Iowans rejected the Free Soil position in the name of sectional harmony but also because they could afford to, since the Missouri Compromise had long ago banned slavery in Nebraska Territory and ensured that only white farmers and laborers would occupy that vast region west of the Missouri River. When the Kansas-Nebraska Act (1854) repealed the Missouri Compromise, however, the chilling thought of masters and slaves invading Nebraska Territory and sullyng the “White Man’s West” overwhelmed their dread of disunion and drove many toward Free Soil politics. More attention to the role of racism would have strengthened Baker’s overall approach and provided a solid grounding for his later discussions of emancipation and postwar struggles over racial equality.

In one of the most original, engaging, and insightful parts of the book, the epilogue focuses on how Iowans struggled to define the meaning of citizenship, civil rights, and equality after Appomattox and how they came to terms with the new biracial Union they helped create. Overall, *The Sacred Cause of Union* is a solid, well-written, and engaging work that provides an updated, more inclusive, and more nuanced portrait of Iowa’s role in the Civil War. We may hope that the book will spur more interest in the Hawkeye State’s important role in safeguarding the sacred cause of a *more perfect* Union.

Thomas R. Baker won the State Historical Society of Iowa’s Benjamin F. Shambaugh Award, recognizing *The Sacred Cause of Union: Iowa in the Civil War*, as the most significant book on Iowa history published in 2016. —Ed.

Jews in Wisconsin, by Sheila Terman Cohen. Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2016. 121 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, index. \$12.95 paperback.

Reviewer Sonja Wentling is associate professor of history at Concordia College, Moorhead, Minnesota. She is a coauthor of *Herbert Hoover and the Jews: The Origins of the “Jewish Vote” and Bipartisan Support for Israel* (2012).

“In my experience all people who have been born in Wisconsin always seem to come back,” Louis Heller, descendant of German Jewish immigrants, nostalgically noted in a 1948 journal entry (104). Heller’s state-

ment captures Sheila Cohen's overarching positive message that Wisconsin has been good to Jews. She not only pays homage to "midwestern nice" but also points to the Jewish symbiosis with Wisconsin that has created an enduring legacy. Cohen's short and loving tribute to the rich history of Wisconsin's Jews highlights unique aspects of Jewish life in the Badger State and describes important characteristics of the Midwest and its Jewish communities today.

Wisconsin emerged as a major hub of German Jewish immigration in the Midwest starting in the mid-nineteenth century, followed by a large influx of Russian Jews as a result of persecution and pogroms throughout Russia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Cohen describes the challenges of Jewish immigrants to adapt and assimilate to midwestern life but also addresses the tensions within a Jewish community that developed into a rich tapestry of congregations and ideologies ranging from religiously observant to socialist and Zionist. Most importantly, aided by a colorful array of primary sources, she illustrates Jewish activism for civil rights and establishes the connections between Jewish life in Wisconsin and world events that proved to be the catalyst for further Jewish immigration, such as Nazi Germany's persecution of Jews and the long shadow of the Holocaust, and the Soviet Union's discrimination against its Jewish citizens during the Cold War.

As in other midwestern states, most of Wisconsin's Jewish population remained concentrated in large cities. As a result, much of the scholarship has focused on Milwaukee as the center of a thriving Jewish community and the home to famous Jews like later Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir. (See especially Louis J. Swichkow and Lloyd P. Gardner, *History of Jews in Milwaukee* [1963] and John Gurda, *One People, Many Paths: The History of Jewish Milwaukee* [2009].) Yet Cohen's account takes readers beyond the urban centers of Milwaukee and Madison to the small towns of Sheboygan and Wisconsin Rapids. Cohen concedes that "Jewish life in small-town Wisconsin has become only a footnote in the Jewish history of the state" (70), but in her interviews she uncovered a fondness for and attachment to these small towns as places of a care-free childhood and safe upbringing. Even Iowa, home to a tiny Jewish population by comparison, could point to the small-town roots of its most famous Jewish exports: Author Edna Ferber, who later established herself in Appleton, Wisconsin, once lived in Ottumwa; and the twins who wrote syndicated newspaper advice columns, Esther Friedman (Ann Landers) and Pauline Friedman (Abigail Van Buren), were born in Sioux City. However, their contributions to American culture would not be honed in rural America but rather in urban centers.

Cohen mentions that dwindling Jewish communities in small-town America are far from the only challenges midwestern Jews have faced in recent decades. Assimilation, secularization, and intermarriage have changed American Jewish identity in general. Her narrative still emphasizes the “bonds of a common ancestry that dates back to ancient history” (86) as the main marker of Jewish identity, yet a 2013 PEW Research study suggests that Jewish identity in America has evolved into what some scholars refer to as an “emancipated diaspora” mentality that maintains identity less by looking back than by being outer directed and engaging the other. (See Roberta Rosenberg, “Jewish ‘Disporic Humor’ and Contemporary Jewish-American Identity,” *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 33 [2015], 110–38.)

Good Seeds: A Menominee Indian Food Memoir, by Thomas Pecore Weso. Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2016. xi, 122 pp. Illustrations, recipe, bibliography, index. \$19.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Christopher Cumo is an independent scholar in Canton, Ohio. He is the author of *Plants and People* (2015).

Author and Menominee Amerindian Thomas Pecore Weso offers a personal account based on childhood and adulthood experiences of the folk- and foodways of the Menominee of Wisconsin during much of the twentieth century. The book is a contribution to the burgeoning field of food history, a dynamic discipline that draws on the work of many scholars. As such, this account deserves a wide readership. The method flows from Weso’s commitment to fact and discrete detail as the backbone of historical reminiscence. The book does not borrow the theoretical architecture of related historical studies, but such constructs would be out of place in a memoir.

Weso organizes *Good Seeds* into a preface and 17 chapters. The emphasis is on short, evocative passages and a fidelity to the past. As is proper for a book concerned with food history, Weso relates the importance of several foods to the Menominee of Wisconsin. We need not belabor them all, but in the first chapter the author remarks about the importance of potatoes and cornbread as staples in his diet and that of the people he knew. Taking Weso’s cue, one can scarcely underrate the value of potatoes and corn. Corn, of course, is a primary crop in Iowa and other midwestern states, whereas potatoes, originating in the Andes Mountains, have emerged as a world crop, at least in the temperate zones. Weso begins the second chapter with a third American crop, supplying a myth for the origin of tobacco, a plant some might call a noxious weed likely native to Virginia. One grasps at once that *Good Seeds*, rooted in the