

Locale and Universe: The Shared Story of the Heartland's Lucas County, Iowa, and the American Nation, 1846-2012

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here; sometimes, as in excerpted work by Robin Wall Kimmerer, several strands come together in one piece.

The book is valuable simply for the lovely writing and illustrations it has gathered. But it is also testimony to impressive erudition and the result of a bold vision. Other editors would have sorted differently, would have perhaps made more clear why “Ancient Peoples” has so much writing by recent European settlers, but it’s a good discussion to have and exemplary of how other place-based writers might want to think about the layering in their landscapes.

Locale and Universe: The Shared Story of the Heartland’s Lucas County, Iowa, and the American Nation, 1846–2012, by Franklin D. Mitchell. Self-published, 2016. 480 pp. Maps, illustrations, table, notes, bibliographical essay. \$32.00 paperback.

Reviewer Kimberly K. Porter, a native of Poweshiek County, Iowa, is professor of history at the University of North Dakota. Her work has focused on local, rural, and agricultural history and oral history. She is working on a biography of Iowan Henry Field.

Self-published books are often poorly received: the editing is usually poor, the argument flimsy, the purpose vague. . . . That can be said of some works I’ve been called upon to review or have stumbled upon in research endeavors, but it’s not entirely true of Franklin D. Mitchell’s history of Lucas County, Iowa.

Mitchell, emeritus professor of history at the University of Southern California, is trained in the ways of academic research and writing, which shows throughout the text. He has also published previously, most notably *Harry S. Truman and the News Media: Contentious Relations and Belated Respect* (1998).

Mitchell’s goal in undertaking *Locale and Universe* is unstated at the onset, but as his work comes to a close, he records his purpose, using the third person: “A historian, native of the county but a non-resident for many years, became a resident once again in the new century’s first decade to take the retrospective measure of a people and a place in time. He recalled in his mind the county’s unsung citizens and its illustrious sons and daughters. They were the pioneers who settled the land and established homes, schools, churches, farms, trades, and professions, followed by railroad workers, coal miners and men and workers in numerous varied enterprises and callings” (464). Some of the county’s residents had been “gentle and wise and a few mean and cruel,” but “the historian” felt the need to tell their tale, relating it to the American experience as a whole.

Accordingly, readers are treated to snippets regarding the area's native population, the arrival of the first European-American settlers, the coming of the railroad, and the heinous activities of assorted criminals that have remained a subject of conversation over the decades. Of greater significance to Mitchell's effort to connect Lucas County to the national experience is his valuable discussion of the coal mining communities that once dotted the region. John L. Lewis, perhaps the most famous miner to come from the county, provides an interesting segue into union activities in the early twentieth-century coalfields.

Chapters detailing life in the late twentieth century and the early years of the twenty-first do not receive as much attention as more distant decades. Of merit, however, is the examination of two Lucas County companies that gained national attention: Johnson Machine Works and the Hy-Vee supermarket chain. The changing face of agriculture also makes a worthy appearance.

A few problems do appear. The vast majority of the research for *Locale and Universe* comes from secondary sources, community wits, and local newspapers. Even those are cited rather enigmatically as a "source" or a "conversation." More serious are the factual errors that occasionally arise. James B. Weaver did not run as the Republican candidate for president in 1880; he did run as a member of the Greenback Party. Mitchell's assertion that, for the Amish, "genetics determine which men wear beards that rim their jaw and leave the rest of their pinkish face smooth and free of hair while others have full beards" (411) is decidedly in error.

Such issues should make readers wary of the "facts" Mitchell provides. However, for those interested in a rather simple tale of one county as an exemplar of the nation, the text should suffice, especially if they happen to be from southern Iowa.

Corn Kings & One-Horse Thieves: A Plain-Spoken History of Mid-Illinois, by James Krohe Jr. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2017. xii, 346 pp. Maps, illustrations, notes, index. \$29.50 paperback.

Reviewer James A. Edstrom is professor of library services and history at William Rainey Harper College in Palatine, Illinois. A scholar of local and Illinois history, he has written a history of Illinois's admission to the Union in 1818 that is under consideration for publication.

Researching and writing the history of even well-defined geographic entities is no simple matter. Boundaries of cities, villages, townships, and counties evolve over time and in the process exert a profound influence over the histories of those political jurisdictions. The central