

## Iowa and the Civil War, volume 1, Free Child of the Missouri Compromise, 1850-1862

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The military controlled telegraphy during the Civil War and the Indian Wars. The end of those conflicts spawned a national debate about turning the telegraph over to civilian and commercial interests during peacetime. Schwoch follows that debate through Iowa Senator William Boyd Allison's joint congressional Commission to Consider the Present Organizations of the Signal Service, Geological Survey, Coast and Geodetic Survey, and the Hydrographic Office of the Navy Department, which he chaired in the late 1880s. While the Allison Commission eventually split on the telegraph question, the government's abiding interest in the telegraph for monitoring weather and the environment was handed over to the Department of Agriculture's Weather Bureau, later the National Weather Service, and eventually the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

*Wired into Nature* is a carefully documented and compelling read. While generally well written, its chapters and narrative threads are not always as seamlessly connected as the communication system it describes. Unfortunately, its ambitious reach also ends by overreaching. The conclusion, while highlighting some of the work's significant findings, lunges for—but misses—contemporary political relevance with a gratuitous attempt at comparing Al Gore's politicized global warming machinations with the historical significance of Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier hypothesis. It is a weak finish to an otherwise interesting and insightful history of the telegraph.

*Iowa and the Civil War, volume 1, Free Child of the Missouri Compromise, 1850–1862*, by Kenneth L. Lyftogt. Iowa City: Camp Pope Publishing, 2018. xvi, 416 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$40.00 hardcover.

Reviewer William B. Feis is professor of history at Buena Vista University. He is the author of *“Essentially American”: General Grenville M. Dodge and Family* (2017) and is working on an anthology of interpretive work on Iowa's role in the Civil War.

Since the publication of Benjamin F. Gue's four-volume *History of Iowa: From the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the Twentieth Century* (1903) and Olynthus B. Clark's *The Politics of Iowa during the Civil War and Reconstruction* (1911), many books and articles focusing on Iowa during the Middle Period have rolled off the presses. The recent Civil War sesquicentennial (2011–2015) spurred new interest in the conflict and resulted in a spate of new books coming out on the Hawkeye State, including the masterful *Necessary Courage: Iowa's Underground Railroad in the Struggle against Slavery* (2013) and *Busy in the Cause: Iowa, the Free-State Struggle in*

*the West, and the Prelude to the Civil War* (2014), both by Lowell J. Soike. These new offerings revealed the pressing need for a new general history of Iowa in the Civil War era.

Thomas R. Baker tried to fill that void with his praiseworthy *The Sacred Cause of Union: Iowa in the Civil War* (2016), but his primary focus on the war years meant that the prewar crises and other issues received far less attention. As a result, the task of writing a narrative history that fully captured Iowa's story from 1846 through 1865 remained unfinished. Enter veteran historian Kenneth L. Lyftogt, author of two fine monographs on Iowa Civil War topics. In his first of three planned volumes under the title *Iowa and the Civil War*, Lyftogt synthesizes the state's diverse Civil War experiences and provides an in-depth yet succinct analysis of Iowans caught in the political battles over the "slavery question" in the 1850s. He captures well the bitter partisan infighting and brings to life colorful political combatants like Samuel Curtis, Augustus Caesar Dodge, George Wallace Jones, Henry Clay Dean, James Grimes, and Samuel Kirkwood. His chapters on "Lawbreaking Idealists" and on John Brown's time in Iowa, the Harpers Ferry raid, and the Coppoc brothers are especially noteworthy. With the same skill, he also describes the state's role in the election of Abraham Lincoln, the reaction to the firing on Fort Sumter, the state's mobilization for war, the courage and leadership of Governor Samuel Kirkwood, and the experiences of Iowa troops in the bloody western campaigns from Wilson's Creek to Shiloh. His descriptions of the political battlefields in Iowa and Washington, D.C., and his seamless transition to the real ones in Missouri and Tennessee make for engaging and enlightening reading. Overall, this volume is worth the price of admission.

As often happens, however, errors great and small find their way into even the best books. For example, while discussing an 1853 meeting about the transcontinental railroad, Lyftogt refers to Samuel Curtis as a "commissioner of the Union Pacific Railroad" (17). However, the UP was not officially created until 1862, and Curtis was not named a commissioner until 1866. Lyftogt also states that the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) cadets providing security at John Brown's execution in 1859 were "commanded by the president of the institute and professor, Thomas J. Jackson" (85). Although a professor, the future Confederate general never held VMI's highest office. Also, while using Kirkwood's January 1862 speech to show his transition from Free Soil Republican to abolitionist, Lyftogt neglects the broader context that likely helped motivate the governor's shift. Four months before his speech, the Republican-dominated Congress had passed the First Confiscation Act, which was the first significant step toward making the destruction of slavery a Union war aim. These minor errors, however, do not significantly detract from

the author's engaging and gifted writing style or his aptitude for making complex issues and events more understandable for general readers.

The larger and more pressing concern, however, involves the bibliography. The author's use of printed primary sources, especially those showcasing the rich diversity of the Iowa experience, is commendable. But a key expectation in writing history is that authors use—or at least show familiarity with—the most recent scholarship on the topic, both to provide adequate context and to alert readers to the important work being done by historians in the field. Unfortunately, the most important and relevant scholarly books and journal articles for this volume are missing in action, including works by Eric Foner, Lowell Soike, James McPherson, Elizabeth Leonard, Robert Dykstra, Timothy Smith, J. L. Anderson, GINETTE AILEY, Nicole Etcheson, William Garrett Piston and Richard Hatcher, and others. These omissions are the most vexing problem in an otherwise admirable book. I hope the remaining volumes will be deepened and enriched by an engagement with recent scholarship, especially when it comes to emancipation, the use of black troops, and the meaning of the war after 1863. If the author combines this with his deep knowledge of Iowa history and his engaging narrative style, his three volumes could indeed become the definitive history of Iowa and the Civil War.

*Civil War Memories: Contesting the Past in the United States since 1865*, by Robert J. Cook. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017. ix, 273 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. \$24.95 paperback and ebook.

Reviewer Sarah J. Purcell is L. F. Parker Professor of History at Grinnell College. The author of *Sealed with Blood: War, Sacrifice, and Memory in Revolutionary America* (2002), she is working on a book tentatively titled *Spectacle of Grief: The Politics of Mourning and the U.S. Civil War*.

In recent decades, the historiography on Civil War memory has grown and flourished. Scholars including David Blight, Caroline Janney, Nina Silber, Joan Waugh, and Fitzhugh Brundage have all explored how memories of the Civil War influenced politics, culture, war, race relations, and national identity in the United States for decades after its conclusion. Most works agree to a certain extent that reunion, reconciliation, and emancipation all formed themes in Civil War remembrance, and every scholar notes competing Southern Lost Cause and Unionist victory themes, but they disagree about their relative importance and the chronology of their development.

Robert J. Cook has brought together much of the important insight from this body of historiography in his brisk, new book, *Civil War Memories*. Cook's work has the advantage of covering the entirety of post-Civil War history, making his the most comprehensive entry in this