The Land-Grant Act and the People's College: Iowa State University

Douglas Biggs

University of Nebraska-Kearney

ISSN 0003-4827
Copyright © 2012 State Historical Society of Iowa. This article is posted here for personal use, not for redistribution.

Recommended Citation
Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.1648

Hosted by Iowa Research Online
teachers who traveled to the South were primarily motivated by racial egalitarianism. Using a host of Northern teachers’ letters, Butchart shows that they were much more likely to have been motivated by a desire to perform missionary work. Few mentioned racial uplift specifically, while some hinted that they simply needed a teaching job.

Another important contribution is the author’s ability to bring to life the perspectives of numerous teachers with personal details. In the final chapter, Butchart does well to link Southern violence against Reconstruction with Southern violence against black schools and teachers. The final chapter is packed with examples of the social ostracism white teachers faced, as well as threats, kidnapping, shots fired, attempted lynchings, and even murder. Most of the violence, however, was directed against property. For example, Butchart relates the story of a black school in North Carolina that was destroyed only eight days after it opened. In each case, Butchart places white opposition against the backdrop of a determined black community. In this example, the school was rebuilt by former slaves in only four days.

The Land-Grant Act and the People’s College: Iowa State University, edited by Allison H. Sheridan. Ames: Iowa State University, 2012. 172 pp. Illustrations, notes, appendixes, index. $38.00 cloth.

Reviewer Douglas Biggs is associate professor of history at the University of Nebraska-Kearney. He is the author of “Forging a Community with Rails: Ames, Iowa Agricultural College, and the Ames & College Railway, 1890–1896” in this issue of the Annals of Iowa.

Allison Sheridan’s anthology of articles celebrates the sesquicentennial of the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862. Among the nine articles exploring various aspects of how the Morrill Act affected Iowa State University (ISU) across time and space, readers will find several that sketch a broad, historical narrative from the founding of the college in 1858 to the present day. Other chapters interpret the campus and significant events in its history: the great milestones reached and achievements made at Iowa State since its founding in 1858; the building, use, and adaptive reuse of Morrill Hall; and the campus itself as a symbol of learning. Complementing these full-length pieces are a number of brief, page-length essays that reveal many details and interesting facts about ISU. The appendixes focus on the people of Iowa State, providing brief biographies of prominent Iowa State professors and graduates, and on the Morrill Act itself, including a transcription of the act in full. The scholarship is somewhat uneven, perhaps because the authors are a mix of professional historians, museum directors, and de-
velopment professionals at ISU, as well as President Gregory Geoffrey. Readers will appreciate the many historical photos illustrating chapters on the history of the university and of Morrill Hall in particular. On the whole, the book is a fine attempt to bring to a general audience the meaning of the Morrill Act within the context of Iowa State University. Those who seek information on the Morrill Act and how it pertains to Iowa State University will find what they seek in this volume.


Reviewer Marvin G. Slind is professor of history at Luther College. His research and writing have focused on Norwegian and Swedish immigration and ethnicity. Although they share the Scandinavian Peninsula and have experienced many similar historical developments, Norway and Sweden are not identical. Even after Norway became part of the Swedish kingdom in 1814, they remained different in many ways. When thousands of Norwegians and Swedes emigrated to America in the late nineteenth century, they brought many of those differences with them. They did not create a single Scandinavian American culture, but instead developed rather separate Swedish American and Norwegian American societies. Those overlapped in many areas, thus representing a degree of Scandinavianism, yet they were not identical. Norwegians and Swedes in the United States: Friends and Neighbors, edited by Philip J. Anderson and Dag Blanck, examines many of their similarities and differences.

In 2007 the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center at Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois, hosted a conference titled “Friends and Neighbors? Swedes and Norwegians in the United States.” That conference served as the basis for this collection of essays. As the titles suggest, the conference examined whether or not relations between Norwegian and Swedish immigrants were indeed friendly; the removal of the question mark in the book’s title indicates that the answer to that question was generally positive.

Anderson and Blanck have collected 17 essays that cover a broad range of Norwegian and Swedish American society. There are also a few references to Danes, Finns, and Icelanders, but the focus is overwhelmingly on Swedes and Norwegians. The book is organized into four broad categories: Context, Culture, Conflict, and Community.

Blanck himself offers the first essay, in which he examines broad patterns of interaction between Swedes and Norwegians; that essay