

Iowa Valor

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Iowa Valor, by Steve Meyer. Garrison, IA: Meyer Publishing, 1994. xii, 512 pp. Illustrations, tables, references, appendix, indexes. \$37.50 cloth.

REVIEWED BY GLENN L. MCMULLEN, IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Iowa Valor is a documentary history of Iowans in the Civil War. As its title indicates, its main focus is on the combat experiences of Iowans; little attention is paid to the home front. The subject is an interesting one, since Iowa had the distinction of having a larger percentage of its military-age males fight for the Union than any other state. Steve Meyer has compiled more than 250 firsthand accounts, including published battle reports, newspaper articles, diaries, and letters, as well as previously unpublished documents in archives and private collections. Short chapter introductions provide background, and documents are accompanied by biographical sketches and photographs. Meyer is thorough in his coverage. Not only does he document where Iowa regiments played a major role—at Shiloh and Vicksburg, for example—but he also includes eyewitness accounts of minor engagements and skirmishes in which Iowa troops were involved.

This is not a scholarly book, nor does it attempt to be one. Meyer says that he wanted to avoid a volume that was "starchy and overly academic" (5). There are no footnotes, though references at the end of each chapter indicate sources used. There is much celebration but little analysis of the claim that Iowans were the "Most Patriotic of the Patriotic" (5). The book could have profited from a closer proofreading of the introductory sections; typographical errors, such as "Manasses" for Manassas (1), are too common. Still, this thick book should find a wide audience. Civil War buffs, readers of popular history, and genealogists will find much here to please them. *Iowa Valor* meets its goal of letting Iowans involved in the nation's most tragic conflict speak for themselves. Their words range from the polished and eloquent to the barely literate, but their voices are equally poignant and their stories are well worth reading.

Grass of the Earth: Immigrant Life in the Dakota Country, by Aagot Raaen, with a new introduction by Barbara Handy-Marchello. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1994. xxvii, 238 pp. Photographs, map. \$12.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY APRIL R. SCHULTZ, ILLINOIS WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

Originally published by the Norwegian-American History Association in 1950, this fascinating memoir details the life of a Norwegian immi-

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