Iowa Images: Dutch Immigrant History Illustrated

Reviewer Paul Fessier is associate professor of history at Dordt College. His research interests include Dutch and German immigrant history in the Midwest. Iowa Images is, first and foremost, Irene Kooi Chadwick’s memoir and family history set among the Dutch Calvinists of northwest Iowa—Sioux County, to be precise. The work is divided into three sections: the first part conveys short stories and episodes drawn from the author’s childhood; the second part (the bulk of the work) focuses on genealogy and the history of her family mixed with personal reminiscences; and the third part deals with the period when the outside world began impinging upon this seemingly closed society during her childhood in the 1930s and ‘40s.

Published with the feel and size of a college textbook, this volume offers plentiful photographs and maps to help one enter the world of the Dutch Reformed. Although genealogical concerns (including a two-foot-long family tree pullout) threaten to overwhelm the author’s interesting narrative, Iowa Images offers an accessible and valuable window into the Dutch Christian Reformed communities on the Great Plains. Her accounts of the Dutch Reformed subculture (shivarees, Huis Bezoek or church elders’ house visits, weddings, and other social patterns) prove the most useful and interesting to general readers. Readers intrigued by such subjects (and one does not have to be Dutch to be find them fascinating) should supplement this book by reading the late Stan Wiersma (aka Sietze Buning), a poet and writer who grew up in Middleburg, Iowa, and his unforgettable sketches of the northwest Iowa Dutch Reformed in Purpaleanie and Other Permutations and Style and Class.


Reviewer Kenneth J. Heineman is professor of history at Ohio University–Lancaster. He has written numerous books and articles on 1960s social protest movements, the rise of modern conservatism, and religion and labor organizing in the 1930s.

A dozen years ago academic studies of student protest at less elite universities in the 1960s were virtually nonexistent. Since then, a flood of books, articles, masters’ theses, and senior honors theses dealing with academic communities outside Berkeley and Columbia University