The descriptions of life in a bawdy river town on the Mississippi and the culture clash of farmers and machinery offer insights for any student of the Upper Midwest. Great technological and educational changes were taking place all across America, and while farm life in North Dakota—“God had leveled the whole country out with a rolling pin” (p. 103)—is not the same as farm life in Indiana, there are similarities that strike Hoosier chords.

The book is not perfect. Editorial decisions separated fine and proper photographs from the applicable text—in one case by more than two hundred pages. The subtitle, An American Album, does not add to the reader’s understanding. The dust jacket emphasizes that this is the story of an “ordinary” family struggling with a rapidly changing world. More accurately, the hero—a doctor—and the heroine—his wife—were the offspring of ordinary, educated, rural doctors. The ordinary farmer and merchant would have had different viewpoints and experiences as they coped with a new way of life even though they shared a similar fate in the Depression. Also, the explanation of the author’s techniques and motivations do not appear until the epilogue and afterword. An earlier placement would have prevented an occasional wondering if “an interview with Anna” and “a letter to Jim,” were citations or creations of the author.

Such a well-written and documented book must be recommended to a wide variety of readers and institutions. It is a marvelous account of one family’s life in the breadbasket of our nation. The local scene—Alfalfa Day, farm accidents, blizzards, grasshoppers, a syphilitic young man—while dominant, is connected to state and national events and tied into the popular culture of the 1880–1940 era as a way of keeping the reader in touch with more familiar guideposts—holidays, popular music, war, fashion, and fads. Historians will be intrigued by the author’s methods, and every reader will be educated and entertained.

Indiana Historical Society, F. Gerald Handfield, Jr. Indianapolis

Cities of the Prairie Revisited: The Closing of the Metropolitan Frontier. By Daniel J. Elazar et al. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986. Pp. 288. Tables, maps, figures, notes, bibliography, index. $25.00.)

In 1970 Daniel J. Elazar’s Cities of the Prairie: The Metropolitan Frontier and American Politics presented the findings of a comparative study of medium-sized communities in ten metropolitan areas in the nation’s heartland. Elazar examined local politics during the era 1946 to 1961 in cities ranging from Champaign-Urbana, Illinois, on the east to Pueblo, Colorado, on the west and from Duluth, Minnesota, on the north to Belleville, Illinois, on the
south. In *Cities of the Prairie Revisited*, Elazar and a coterie of disciples have returned to the previously examined communities to survey the changing course of politics during the second half of the postwar generation from 1962 to 1977. Whereas most studies of local politics present a snapshot of a community in a single time period, Elazar boasts that *Cities of the Prairie Revisited* and his earlier volume together offer a portrait over time, thus "creating the basis for a more systematic and substantial longitudinal comparison than has ever been undertaken in the study of urban politics" (p. 8).

The new book consists of two sections. In the first 160 pages Elazar presents an overview, describing the changing rhythms of local politics in the midwestern communities. Then in the last 90 pages his four coauthors each contribute a case study that reinforces Elazar's arguments. The four subjects of the case studies are Pueblo, Champaign-Urbana, Decatur, Illinois, and Joliet, Illinois.

A repeated theme in both the overview and the case studies is the adaptation of local politics to increased federal intervention and to the new stream of federal money flowing from the Great Society programs of the late 1960s. During the 1950s the federal presence by comparison was minor. Elazar and his colleagues discover that the heartland communities adapted to the new federal initiatives without sacrificing their local political culture. For example, Maren Allan Stein finds that the political character of Decatur did not change markedly in the 1960s and 1970s despite the proliferation of federal programs. For better or worse, Decatur remained distinctively Decatur.

On the whole, Elazar's overview and the four case studies reveal much that will be of interest to political scientists and urban scholars in general. Even though Elazar and his colleagues surveyed no Indiana communities, their approach to the study of medium-sized cities and their conclusions should prove stimulating to anyone concerned with the Hoosier cities that are not too distant in mileage or culture from Champaign-Urbana or Joliet.

Purdue University, Jon C. Teaford
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This book, a volume in the new American Movement series, has special value for college courses on modern urban America. Jon C. Teaford, the author of perceptive studies in the history of municipal government, here applies his talents to a wider theme, the general growth and fragmentation of the modern metropolitan