

broader history of the Old Northwest. The volume is nicely produced and is adorned with good maps. Michigan State University Press has recently become a player in early republic studies. Unfortunately, this volume, like earlier ones from the press, appears to be priced mainly for libraries. This will deter some people who might otherwise buy this book from doing so.

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Ham, Eggs, and Corn Cake: A Nebraska Territory Diary. By Erastus F. Beadle. Introduction by Ronald C. Naugle. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001. Pp. xxiv, 130. Notes, maps, index. Paperbound, \$12.95.)

Erastus F. Beadle left both his comfortable position in his publishing company and his wife and three children to venture from New York to Omaha City, Nebraska Territory, in 1857. He intended to make his fortune in real estate and resettle there eventually with his family. Even though his plans did not succeed and he returned to New York within the year, his diary provides a fascinating glimpse into the lives of individuals and families whose optimism drove them to pursue prosperity in the West.

The introduction by Ronald C. Naugle places the few months of Beadle's adventure within a historical context and describes Beadle's successes before and after his real estate fiasco. After Beadle returned to New York he rejoined his brother in the publishing house of Beadle and Adams, which became known for more than fifty different kinds of publications, of which the Dime Novel is the best remembered.

The strength of the diary lies in Beadle's astute observations of ordinary people caught up in extraordinary circumstances. Beadle is succinct yet perceptive in his observations of everyday life. The account of his twenty-one-day journey from New York to Omaha illuminates the difficulties of travel in the mid-nineteenth century. He began the trip in a rail car but from that point made use of a variety of conveyances, including steamers, ferries, buggies, stage coaches, and even his own feet during some of the stretches.

Many of the hazards of travel are described with seemingly good humor. Navigating the Missouri was difficult at best: "we came in collision with the Crossman [another river boat] and smashed in our wheelhouse on the same side the previous injury was sustained" (p. 14). Toward the end of his journey, the stage coach in which Beadle was a passenger got mired in the mud during a rainstorm. The passengers had to disembark and wade through the water, "knee deep and some of the way up to the seat of our pants" (p. 25). The walk into Council Bluffs turned out to be six miles.

A particularly intriguing aspect of this diary is Beadle's revelation of the personalities of the individuals he encounters. Unlike many diarists, he includes women and children in his descriptions. "Aunt has been a very intelligent woman for her time . . ." (p. 4); "Mrs. Leavett is one of the fire brands of the freestates party" (p. 11); "Little Augusta Manages her pony like a skillful rider as she is. She is the smallest girl I ever saw ride a horseback" (p. 33).

Throughout his adventure, Beadle continually mentions how he longs for his wife, whom he refers to as Mate, and his children. When letters from home do not arrive he is acutely disappointed. Yet, he remains optimistic and is awed by the natural beauty of the Plains. "The wild ducks came up within ten feet of me and fed along the bank" (p. 43); "We had the finest sunset this evening I ever beheld" (p. 71). And he takes an interest in the political scene: "The Ballot Box was an old sugar box. . . I had the great honor of casting the first vote that was ever cast in the pappillion district" (p. 102). He also comments on the conditions of the Omaha Indians and the Pawnee: "The Indians have been greatly wronged" (p. 57).

Although Beadle talks of building a cabin and anticipates the arrival of his family, his entries begin to provide hints that all is not well. Rather abruptly he is on his way home to New York. Beadle does not give the details of his decision to return. His adventure obviously was a financial failure, but his diary leaves an unexpected legacy of great value, providing an insight into the lives of those who dreamed of what for many became impossible.

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In the First Line of Battle: The 12th Illinois Cavalry in the Civil War.

By Samuel M. Blackwell, Jr. (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2002. Pp. xviii, 222. Maps, illustrations, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$35.00.)

As a history graduate student at Northern Illinois University, Samuel M. Blackwell, Jr., discovered that a regimental history of the Twelfth Illinois Cavalry did not exist. Thus began his Ph.D. dissertation. Blackwell has thoroughly examined many surviving primary sources for the regiment, including some in private hands. These materials include muster rolls, company reports, pension records, diaries, and soldiers' letters to family, friends, and hometown newspapers. Regrettably, the depth and scope of these sources all too often hindered the author's ability to provide substantive analysis. The prose is occasionally lively and engaging but reads like a dissertation influenced more by an understanding of modern combat than of nineteenth-century tactics. The author describes skirmishes as "firefights" (p. 152) and has the