

Pioneers and Profits: Land Speculation on the Iowa Frontier. By Robert P. Swierenga. (Ames: The Iowa State University Press, 1968. Pp. xxviii, 260. Maps, illustrations, notes, tables, appendices, note on sources, index. \$7.50.)

In this brilliant first book Robert P. Swierenga has written the best monograph known to the reviewer on this or any other topic in Iowa history. The only other book which stands up to it in scholarship is Thomas R. Ross' *Jonathan Prentiss Dolliver* (1958).

Swierenga's method and style give promise of more good things to follow. *Pioneers and Profits* is a published version of his doctoral dissertation and clearly owes much to the ideas of his mentor, Allan G. Bogue, to whom the book is dedicated. The author used the quantitative approach and a vast body of computerized data, and his statistics are neatly imposed upon an historical narrative based on a tremendous range of archival and secondary sources. Some of his data fell into his lap, so to speak, as the by-product of a hearing before the Indian Claims Commission; much of it he dredged up in county courthouses and in libraries from Iowa to Virginia to Boston. The important thing is that he was skillful enough to reduce the data to a meaningful narrative susceptible of logical treatment.

Swierenga leans toward Horace Greeley's concept of the speculator as a settler or promoter who buys more land than he can personally use, holding it for a price rise. Speculators were more active in Iowa than in any other state (p. 6); therefore, this case study is of more than casual interest and value. The author has studied the records covering fifty-three eastern and central counties out of the ninety-nine in Iowa, embracing four Indian cessions, an area equal to approximately half of Iowa's land mass of nearly thirty-six million acres. In this essay the detailed treatment is confined to the activities of large scale investors in government lands.

Basically, Swierenga is seeking an answer to questions about the role of speculators in opening up Iowa to actual settlers, primarily farmers. Like the Bogues—Allan G. Bogue and Margaret B. Bogue, "‘Profits’ and the Frontier Land Speculator," *Journal of Economic History*, XVII (March, 1957), 1-24—he flatly rejects the traditional emphasis on the social and political effects of government land policy, which have usually been pronounced as adverse, and treats speculation as an aspect of economic history. The author wants to know who the speculators were, how much land they entered in their own names at government auctions or other sales, and the price of such lands when they were resold. The factual matter of the book and the author's conclusions are not easily condensed into one simple generalization. By and large he finds that the speculators played a helpful role in filling in and developing the frontier and do not deserve the bad name which has so often been given to them. Many incidental questions are answered in the course of the study, and several myths of Iowa history are gently laid to rest.

Although primarily a specialist's book for specialists, the general reader will not find this work forbidding. It is attractively manufactured; the numerous tables and maps are well done; and the indispensable footnotes are at the bottom of the page, a real boon in this case. One minor error was noted: Henry Clay Dean is mistakenly listed (p. 217) as a speculator who attained a seat in Congress.

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Before Mark Twain: A Sampler of Old, Old Times on the Mississippi. Edited by John Francis McDermott. *Travels on the Western Waters.* Edited by John Francis McDermott. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1968. Pp. xxxiii, 298. Notes, illustrations, index. \$15.00.)

The casual reader of Mark Twain is probably unaware of the fact that although Twain gave the classical account of life on the Mississippi River he was not the literary discoverer of that stream. Indeed long before Huck and Jim took their immortal cruise on the raft, many other adventurers had become familiar with the western waters: explorers, merchants, slave traders, missionaries, backwoodsmen, keelboatmen, and gamblers. A surprising number of them were articulate and literate, and some of their accounts have the vividness and immediacy if not perhaps the nostalgia of Clemens' own record.

With the present volume John Francis McDermott launches a fascinating new series of books about the rivers of the Middle West, either anthologies of material gathered from miscellaneous sources or new editions of titles long out of print and not generally available. Thus we are promised fresh editions of Christian Schultz, Zadok Cramer, George H. DeVol, and J. C. Beltrami. This series should prove invaluable.

Before Mark Twain presents a wide spectrum of fluvial life, with the emphasis generally on the river rather than on the settlements along its banks although both St. Louis and New Orleans receive some attention. Steamboat travel on the Mississippi before the Civil War was both exciting and hazardous. A boat was vulnerable in many ways: it could run aground and be battered by the river current, it could be speared by a sawyer or pierced by a floating tree, it could be blown sky high by an explosion which was often caused by the captain's passion to win a steamboat race and by his willingness to feed the boilers with turpentine or tar as well as cordwood. Few steamboats survived more than two or three years on the Ohio and Mississippi, but this high incidence of disaster did not prevent the builders from fitting out their vessels with elegant furnishings and providing passengers with sumptuous meals and well stocked bars.

Yet this is not to say that river travel was always comfortable. Slaves, immigrants, and the indigent crowded the upper decks; sanitary arrangements were primitive, and space for sleeping was often inadequate even if one had blankets and a mattress. Mosquitoes proved troublesome; the engines were