

STATE HISTORICAL
SOCIETY OF IOWA

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

The Annals of Iowa

Volume 67 | Number 1 (Winter 2008)

pps. 106-108

Iowa State Fair: Country Comes to Town

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ISSN 0003-4827

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Recommended Citation

Rasmussen, Chris. "Iowa State Fair: Country Comes to Town." *The Annals of Iowa* 67 (2008), 106-108.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.1182>

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paraphrase Weidenmann's motivations and intentions, when direct quotations from the primary sources might provide a clearer account of events.

However, Favretti's apparent affinity for Weidenmann and the book's conversational tone should make it appealing for a lay audience interested in landscape design. For readers in Iowa, especially, the book is not only accessible, but also provides new and surprising details about the design and construction of some beloved Iowa landmarks, such as the state capitol grounds, state fairgrounds, and Terrace Hill. Weidenmann's work on the fairgrounds and Terrace Hill are interesting, but they pale beside his work on the capitol grounds, which he began in 1884 and completed in 1890. Interestingly, Weidenmann had worked on portions of the U.S. Capitol grounds in 1874, drawing and rendering plans for Olmsted during their years of collaboration. Weidenmann's own plans for the Iowa state capitol, with its sweeping walkways, lush picturesque plantings, and great stairway leading from the western façade to the Des Moines River, seem to recall Olmsted's earlier design, a fact that goes unnoted in the text. However, Favretti's otherwise detailed account and images of Weidenmann's design do reveal that the capitol grounds were as carefully and ornately designed as the building, with the same intention of elevating the art and culture of a frontier state.

Sadly, little of Weidenmann's landscape design for the Iowa state capitol remains extant today, with the exception of the grand stairway. Indeed, as the book makes clear, most of Weidenmann's works are lost or substantially altered, a fact that highlights the book's real value. By documenting Weidenmann's landscapes, Favretti makes them live again, at least in text and pictures, and ensures their inclusion as an important part of our national and state history. This book should inspire citizens and historians to seek out Iowa's other designed historic landscapes as places worthy of serious study.

Iowa State Fair: Country Comes to Town, by Thomas Leslie. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2007. 142 pp. Illustrations (many in color), notes. \$19.95 paper.

Reviewer Chris Rasmussen is associate professor of history at Fairleigh Dickinson University. He is the author of a Ph.D. dissertation on the Iowa State Fair as well as "Progress and Catastrophe: Public History at the Iowa State Fair, 1854-1946," *Annals of Iowa* 63 (Fall 2004).

Thomas Leslie's *Iowa State Fair* offers a succinct, informative, and enjoyable account of the annual exhibition, now more than 150 years old.

Leslie's narrative is organized chronologically, and traces the fair from its origins to the present. As he observes, the fair has throughout its history been a spur to progress while at the same time celebrating Iowa's agrarian heritage. As Iowa became more urbanized, the fair's managers strove to appeal to a changing audience while remaining true to the state's rural heritage. This paradoxical commitment to both modernization and tradition has always been the fair's hallmark.

Leslie, an architectural historian, builds his case for the fair's significance by examining the layout of the fairgrounds and its buildings. In recent years, architectural historians have moved beyond a consideration of great architects, focusing instead on institutional and vernacular architecture, and Leslie's discussion of the development of the fairgrounds is the strongest chapter in this fine book. As he observes, the layout of the permanent fairgrounds, created in the 1880s, clearly divides the fair's activities into domestic crafts, agriculture, machinery, commercial exhibits, and entertainment (51). The development of fairground architecture, which rapidly progressed from hastily constructed wood-frame buildings to the substantial brick exhibition buildings familiar to most Iowans, suggests the fair's tremendous significance in the early twentieth century. Between 1900 and the onset of the Great Depression, the state of Iowa transformed the fairgrounds, funding construction of the fair's Livestock Pavilion, Grandstand, and nearly all of its permanent exhibition buildings. These brick and steel buildings, Leslie notes, "reflected the grand civic aspirations of the fair" in the early twentieth century (57). Even more attention to the scores of booths, tents, and kiosks that also dotted the grounds during the fair would be a welcome addition to this architectural history.

Buildings alone cannot tell the fair's story, of course, so Leslie recounts the many activities that took place in these buildings and on the grounds. Although the fairgrounds and exhibition buildings are permanent, the fair itself is fleeting and boisterous. Leslie discusses the many exhibits, entertainments, and activities that enliven the fair. Readers seeking a detailed history of midways, the 4-H, or horse racing will not find it here, but this book does offer a wide-ranging and informative overview of the state fair.

World War II marked a watershed in the fair's history. In the postwar years, the fair no longer played a central role in developing Iowa's agricultural economy, and state funding for fair buildings dried up. Rapid technological and cultural change impelled the fair board to scramble to make the fair seem contemporary by building "Teen Town" in 1964, embarking on a string of themed fairs (the 1973 fair beckoned Iowans to "Discover Hawaii" on the fairgrounds), and

booking country and pop concerts. As Leslie terms it, recent fairs have offered “new traditions,” a paradoxical term that encapsulates the fair’s longstanding tension between promoting innovation and hailing the virtues of traditional rural life. Today, Leslie writes, the fair “has become a touchstone throughout the country for the largely lost connection to our agrarian past” (21).

Iowa State Fair is beautifully produced and lavishly illustrated, with more images than pages. Leslie makes good use of photographs, postcards, and advertisements to evoke vividly the fair’s growth. His additional evidence consists primarily of journalistic accounts of the fair and the fair’s own promotional material. Historians will note the absence of archival sources and historiographic debates, but general readers will find Leslie’s narrative engaging.

One Day for Democracy: Independence Day and the Americanization of Iron Range Immigrants, by Mary Lou Nemanic. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007. xvii, 252 pp. Map, illustrations, color plates, notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95 cloth.

Reviewer Frank Van Nuys is associate professor of history at the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology. He is the author of *Americanizing the West: Race, Immigrants, and Citizenship, 1890–1930* (2002).

Mary Lou Nemanic’s brief study of how immigrants alternately shaped and were shaped by Fourth of July celebrations in the Iron Range communities of northern Minnesota is both a personal and scholarly work. She and her husband, a native of the area, have devoted years to traveling the region collecting the photographs and oral histories that provide the foundation for this engaging book. Nemanic draws on a variety of disciplines, including anthropology, cultural studies, folklore studies, history, mass communication, and sociology, to examine a century of Front Range Independence Day celebrations. For her, the Fourth of July is “a cultural text or cultural artifact” (17) that demonstrates how immigrant groups have developed American identities that strongly reflect ethnicity and class while also making accommodations to the unrelenting pressures of mass culture.

The author uses the historical background of the American Revolution and early nineteenth-century Independence Day festivities to situate her twentieth-century Iron Range celebrations within rowdy Old World carnival traditions of resistance. Native-born members of the middle class were equally determined to transform the holiday into a venue of unity and decorum, an impulse given significant impetus during an era of labor strife in the first two decades of the 1900s.