

STATE HISTORICAL
SOCIETY OF IOWA

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

The Annals of Iowa

Volume 69 | Number 4 (Fall 2010)

pps. 455-

The Passing of the Prairie by a Fossil: Biographical Sketches of Central Iowa Pioneers and Civil War Veterans

Lori Ann Lahlum
Minnesota State University

ISSN 0003-4827

Copyright © 2010 State Historical Society of Iowa. This article is posted here for personal use, not for redistribution.

Recommended Citation

Lahlum, Lori A. "The Passing of the Prairie by a Fossil: Biographical Sketches of Central Iowa Pioneers and Civil War Veterans." *The Annals of Iowa* 69 (2010).

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.1480>

Hosted by [Iowa Research Online](http://iowa-research-online.org)

The Passing of the Prairie by a Fossil: Biographical Sketches of Central Iowa Pioneers and Civil War Veterans, by Nehemias Tjernagel; edited by Margaret Harstad Matzke with an introduction by Peter Tjernagel Harstad. LaVerne, TN: Author House in cooperation with the Story City Historical Society, 2009. xix, 248 pp. Illustrations, appendix, index. \$18.00 cloth, \$12.00 paper.

Reviewer Lori Ann Lahlum is associate professor of history at Minnesota State University, Mankato. She is the author of "‘Everything Was Changed and Looked Strange’: Norwegian Women in South Dakota" in *South Dakota History* (2005).

In the early twentieth century, Nehemias Tjernagel, the son of Norwegian immigrants, began collecting stories about the early pioneers (many of them Norwegians) who settled in Iowa's Hamilton and Story counties before 1865. These settlers, according to Tjernagel, quickly transitioned from poor immigrants to successful Americans. To tell their stories, Tjernagel wrote biographical sketches. In the sketches, Tjernagel documents the transition of frontier Iowa to settled place. He places a premium on interesting stories, especially those involving American Indians. He also sought out Union veterans of the Civil War, and some engaging Civil War stories are included. The appendix of pioneers and Civil War soldiers is especially useful. Written in Norwegian and translated by a number of people, the book remained unpublished at the time of Tjernagel's death in 1958. A copy of the original manuscript is at the State Historical Society of Iowa in Iowa City.

People interested in Iowa history will find *The Passing of the Prairie* an interesting read. It may be most useful to genealogists because Tjernagel details family connections and provides information on settlers' backgrounds. In the introduction, Peter Tjernagel Harstad teases out "three major themes — immigration, pioneering, and preservation of the Union" (xv). He also notes that although the biographies appear to be about men, Tjernagel did not ignore the role of women. In many of the biographies, however, women exist largely as married to or the daughters of the men profiled. The last section, "Pioneer Pictures," provides an interesting discussion of "the role of women" in the Euro-American settling of Iowa.

Race and Radicalism in the Union Army, by Mark A. Lause. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009. vii, 208 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, index. \$45.00 cloth.

Reviewer Terry L. Beckenbaugh is assistant professor of military history at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.