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Investing in Iowa: The Life and Times of F. M. Hubbell

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workers in Minnesota, and the circumstances of the labor movement of the time. Jensen maintains this commitment to full context throughout the book with every subject that she introduces. The notes for each chapter testify to the extensive research each segment and sub-segment required. The result is impressive and the information encyclopedic. *Calling This Place Home* will serve not only as a good history well told, but as a reference work of much value to students of women's history, midwestern or Wisconsin history, and the story of rural life and culture.

In the introduction, Jensen sets her work within the New Western revisionist school of interpretation, with its multicultural view and its utopian demand for justice or "it should have been" about past events and behaviors. Certainly, many of her stories are those of struggle, poverty, loss, and constant change. Jensen's sorrow and frustration at the circumstances and at injustices many of the women of north central Wisconsin suffered comes through. Yet those women also laughed and danced; raised families; preserved their cultures; built their churches, schools, and hospitals; served their communities; and created lives that mattered within the context of their own times. It is all here, the complete story, the tragedy and the joy.

Investing in Iowa: The Life and Times of F. M. Hubbell, by William B. Friedrichs. Des Moines: The Iowan Books, 2007. ix, 224 pp. Illustrations, appendix, notes, index. \$18.95 paper.

Reviewer Eric J. Morser teaches history at the University of Florida. His research and writing have focused on the interrelated histories of business, labor, gender, and politics in nineteenth-century La Crosse, Wisconsin.

In this concise and well-researched biography, William B. Friedrichs surveys the life of Frederick M. Hubbell, an early booster who helped transform Des Moines into a thriving western city and who eventually became one of the wealthiest men in Iowa. Like so many tales of settlement, Hubbell's western story began in the East. In 1855 a teenaged Hubbell and his father left their Connecticut home and trekked west in search of fame and fortune. Soon after they arrived in Des Moines, the younger Hubbell embarked on a commercial journey that would keep him in town for the better part of the next 75 years. He quickly found a job working as an office boy in a Des Moines land office, where he mingled with speculators and became familiar with the business of property. From that point on, Hubbell focused his energies and acquired his wealth. He made waves buying and selling local real estate but quickly moved into other ventures. By the 1860s he had invested in urban transportation and services and founded Iowa's first

life insurance company. He also recognized the commercial potential of railroads and built new lines that linked Des Moines with emerging regional and national markets. Together, Hubbell's efforts made him a rich man and one of Iowa's Gilded Age captains.

Hubbell was not just concerned with his own prosperity and power. As he became an established financial player in Des Moines, he took steps to ensure that his influence would live on in his descendants and in the thriving city around him. His children and grandchildren enjoyed the privileges of wealth. They attended the finest schools and toured the world. Many returned home to comfortable positions in the family business. He also ensured their place after his death when he set up an innovative trust to nurture their inheritance. Such generosity did not end with kin. As Hubbell grew older, he also invested time and money in local charities, embraced prohibition and other political causes, and paved the way for construction of a new civic center and other urban improvements. Hubbell may not have been as ostentatiously altruistic as Andrew Carnegie. Friedrichs, however, deftly demonstrates how Hubbell's charitable efforts shaped Des Moines and its people.

Friedrichs never explicitly engages the question of frontier mythology in his book. Yet he does a commendable job of undermining pervasive American folklore that describes western settlers as independent, pioneering men who fled the stifling confines of eastern society and planted civilization on the nation's savage border largely on their own terms. Hubbell was clearly a hard-working and highly motivated entrepreneur. But, as Friedrichs reveals, Hubbell took ready advantage of business connections to succeed in his efforts. Beginning with Phineas M. Casady, who tendered the callow Connecticut boy a job in his Des Moines law office, Hubbell forged critical personal bonds with a series of benevolent patrons who provided him with work, capital, and contacts. Friedrichs further reminds us that Hubbell, like most successful capitalists, was often the beneficiary of fortuitous events and good timing. Most important, as Hubbell began to amass a small fortune, the arrival of the first Iowa railroads offered him a golden opportunity to augment his wealth. Such examples show that although hardheaded determination and an uncompromising work ethic were necessary, they were not always sufficient to guarantee financial success on Iowa's urban frontier.

Friedrichs's exploration of Hubbell's life and economic legacy is largely admiring. At times, his celebratory narrative skims over some of the more troubling, but potentially more illuminating, aspects of Hubbell's prosperity. Time and again, for example, the author demon-

strates that Hubbell preyed upon the commercial misfortune of others. As an ambitious young lawyer, he made his name purchasing warrants and tax liens. He later took advantage of tough commercial times either to seize control of struggling railroad corporations or to drive them out of business to enhance his private wealth and power. Friedrichs further reveals that Hubbell did not always play well with local politicians, particularly when he warred with the Des Moines City Council over municipal waterworks. There is nothing wrong with lauding Hubbell and other innovative American business leaders for their economic contributions. Nevertheless, greater focus on the financial consequences of Hubbell's empire building could shed intriguing light on the darker side of Gilded Age capitalism and render him a more complex and compelling character in this story.

Investing in Iowa is ultimately an insightful study of the life of a groundbreaking person who left a lasting mark on his world. The book may not offer much that will surprise scholars of western settlement, urbanization, or business. For readers interested in how an intrepid entrepreneur built a commercial fiefdom in a particular Iowa place, however, it offers an enlightening read.

Upstream Metropolis: An Urban Biography of Omaha and Council Bluffs, by Lawrence H. Larsen, Barbara J. Cottrell, Harl A. Dalstrom, and Kay Calame Dalstrom. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007. xiii, 507 pp. Illustrations, index. \$19.95 paper.

Reviewer Jon C. Teaford is professor emeritus of history at Purdue University. He is the author of *The Rise of the States: Evolution of American State Government* (2002) and *Cities of the Heartland: The Rise and Fall of the Industrial Midwest* (1993).

Although neither Iowa nor Nebraska is generally perceived as an urban state, a major metropolitan area straddles their common border. *Upstream Metropolis* offers a thorough and enlightening history of this sprawling urban mass, tracing the evolution of Omaha and Council Bluffs, with lesser coverage of adjacent suburban communities. Given the significance of the Omaha-Council Bluffs metropolis, this new volume should prove a valuable resource to anyone interested in the urban Midwest. Iowans especially should applaud the coverage afforded Council Bluffs. There have been a number of histories of Omaha, but the smaller Iowa city has suffered relative neglect. *Upstream Metropolis* is, then, not a biography of a single city but an attempt to encompass the development of a metropolitan area spanning two states and including two historic hubs.